THE BOOK OF THE WILD



Frontispiece

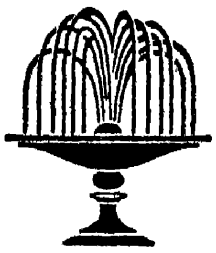
kangaroo can leap from ten to twenty feet at a single jump, and go right over bushes and rocks."

THE BOOK OF THE WILD

Nature Tales from Many Lands

by

J. CHAPPELL



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CONTENTS

MRS. KANGAROO ON POCKETS

A FARM-YARD COMPETITION

A CHAT ABOUT BEARS

ROUND THE HOME OF THE POLAR BEAR

LETTERS FROM INDIA

THREE FRIENDS IN A FIELD

THE GRUNTING OX

THE NUT-GATHERERS

RONALD AND THE RED DEER

THE CUCKOO'S NURSE

WAITING FOR SUPPER

FAIRIES OF THE FLOWER GARDEN

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MRS. KANGAROO ON POCKETS.

"NO pockets in your dress, Mrs. Antelope? Well, you do surprise me! And you might almost as well have no tail, for the good your scrap of a thing is. In fact, it isn't a tail at all; in my opinion, it's only an *apology!* No offence, of course. You seemed so like our family in the face, that I fancied you might be a distant relation; but with no pouch, and no tail, I'm sure you can't be.

"Your tail is big enough for you, do you say? But how *can* it be? You can't stand upon it, can you? Don't want to? Well, that's funny. I can't see the good of a tail, anyhow, unless you do stand upon it. Just look at mine, if you want to see what a tail ought to be—a good yard long, and as thick round as a man's leg! That and my two hind legs—which are something *like* hind legs, and well match my tail—support my whole weight comfortably, like a tripod-stand. I've no need to put my front feet to the ground like a common four-legged animal. In fact, we were always taught to consider it vulgar to put one's front paws to the ground. They are hands, not feet, and are meant to hold our food to our mouths, or to fight with.

"But how in the world you manage without any pocket is what astonishes me most! Where *do* you put your babies when they are born? On a bed of grass and leaves? I should always be mislaying or overlaying mine if I did that. You see, they

are not more than an inch long at first, so it would never do to have them lying about to get lost or stepped upon, so I just carry my baby about with me in that nice useful lap-bag with which Nature has provided me, and it is quite safe.

"My little one stays in my pouch, and spends all its time sucking and growing, till it is about eight months old. By that time it is big enough to venture its head out and nibble the grass while I am feeding. Soon it grows stronger, and wants to try if it can hop on its own feet, so on a nice, fine day I let it go out for the first time by itself; but it soon gets tired, and is glad to jump into the pouch again.

"Am I fond of my baby? I should just think I am! If we mothers are pursued by hunters, our greatest care is for the safety of the little ones we carry with us. If we become so weak from fatigue or wounds that we can carry them no farther, we sit up on our hind legs, and with our front paws help the poor little dear out of the pouch, and show it where to hide. If, after that, the men leave off chasing us, we hasten back to the spot where the little one is concealed, and after caressing it to allay its fear, we take it into the pouch again and escape with it to the deeper parts of the forest. If a kangaroo mother is wounded to death, she will stand still beneath the blows of the hunter, her last efforts being to protect and save her little one. Yet, naturally, the female kangaroo is so timid, that one that was being chased has been known to die of fear, without a wound upon her.

"Our males are brave, and will make a gallant fight for life. If you were to see a Great Kangaroo standing up on the tips of his toes and the end of his tail, you would think you had met a giant. He can balance himself on the end of his tail alone, just for a moment, when he is fighting, so that he can strike with his hind legs and front paws at the same time. His hind feet are terrible weapons, being armed with sharp claws, the middle one of which is immensely long and strong, and, with one blow from this, he can often kill the dog sent to attack him.

"Why is the dog set upon him, do you ask? I used to wonder very much myself, for the kangaroos are a harmless and peaceable people, living entirely upon vegetation, browsing upon low bushes and herbage. But I have since heard that we are very useful, when dead, to the natives of Australia, which is our home. They hunt us with the spear or the boomerang—which is a queer-shaped piece of wood they throw at us with such skill that they can unfailingly hit, even at a distance of ninety or a hundred yards.

"They eat our flesh, which is very good food, and our skin makes serviceable sacks and bags. The tendons of our tail are used as string or thread, and our bones can be made into rude needles and the heads of spears. That long sharp nail I told you about, on our hind feet, is used as a spear-head just as it is. So, you see, the savage in Australia has some excuse for killing us, as he is very poor. But what I can't understand

is, how rich white men can pursue and murder us for *fun*—or *sport*, as they call it! Yet they do. There are several ways of hunting us.

"One way is for a number of men to form a large circle round a piece of jungle that is known to be the home of kangaroos, and, by hideous yells and shouts, to frighten the poor, timid creatures out of their retreats. They then take advantage of their terror and confusion to knock them down with boomerangs or clubs. But this is chiefly the black man's way of doing it. The white man comes with fierce dogs and a gun. You would think no dog would ever catch one of our kind, for a kangaroo can leap from ten to twenty feet at a single jump, and go right over bushes and rocks, and anything that happens to be in the way. He leaps upon his enormously strong hind legs, and his tail helps him. But a dog can keep up longer, so he tires out the poor kangaroo and overtakes him.

"But sometimes, when a kangaroo is desperate, he will get his back up against a tree, so that nobody can hurt him from behind, and, standing upright, he will meet and kill every dog that comes for him. He seizes the dog in his front paws, and tears him open with a blow from that bayonet-like hind claw. The only way he can, then, be overcome, is for well-trained dogs to be sent to him who just *pretend* to attack him, while in reality taking care to keep out of his reach. Then, while all the kangaroo's attention is taken up with them, one of the hunters slips off his horse, and creeps

behind the tree with his long knife, and stabs the kangaroo unawares. Isn't that a cowardly and sneaky thing to do?

"Now and then the kangaroo will get rid of a dog by a very clever trick. He will seize the fellow in his short, strong arms, and rush away with him to the nearest water, and, plunging in, will hold the enemy under it till he is drowned. A brother of mine, who is a very large and powerful "Old Man" Kangaroo, says he once revenged himself in that way on a man who was pursuing him, but my husband doesn't quite believe it.

"Are kangaroos good swimmers? Yes, indeed. A cousin of mine, a fine, spirited young fellow, once found himself unexpectedly in the middle of a pack of hunting-dogs. He first of all took a couple of high jumps with his head up, and stood as tall as he could on his toes and his tail to see which way the coast looked clearest, then away he went, leaping a clear fifteen feet at each bound. He ran about fourteen miles in this way, and was keeping well ahead of the hounds, when he made the unfortunate blunder of taking to a tongue of land that ran out into the sea.

"Of course he didn't know it was like that until, after running another four miles, he reached the end of this land, and found himself with water on three sides of him, and the dogs behind. If it had been shallow water, he would have rushed in to where it was a few feet deep, and waited for the dogs to come, for it would have been easy enough for him to drown them one after another

as they swam to attack him. But this was an arm of the sea, and the nearest point of land on the other side was two miles away.

"However, as I have said, he was a courageous young buck, so he dived into the sea, and, notwithstanding his eighteen mile run beforehand, succeeded in reaching the opposite shore, and the hounds having lost the scent in the water, my cousin escaped.

"But this was considered among us to have been a great feat, and it will be told to the children and grandchildren of our people for many a year to come.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Antelope, but I see my little son Joey—all baby-kangaroos are called Joey, you know, it is a name the white men gave them. It is quite time he came back to the pouch and had his nap. Come here, Joey, my dear, and show Mrs. Antelope how nice and pretty you look tucked up in bed. See how he doubles up those sharp hind claws of his, so that they stand up like sticks on each side of his ears. And don't you think the way the tip of his tail hangs out under his chin is perfectly *sweet?*

"A white man who was watching us one day, when Joey sat in the pouch munching a cabbage-stump which he had picked up while I stooped to nibble a few green herbs, said he reminded him of 'a boy looking out of a window and eating an apple.'

"That same man, who was really, for a human being, very inoffensive, used to amuse himself

by tossing bits of bread or sugar into my pouch when Joey didn't happen to be there, and he seemed to think it vastly funny when I put my hand in to fish them out, for he laughed tremendously. I don't see anything so very extraordinary about it, do you? I wish I thought there was a bit of sugar in the bottom of my pocket now! I'd soon hunt for it and find it.

"You didn't know we liked sweet things? Oh, but we do. We have been told of one of the first of our people to be tamed by man, that it was excessively fond of sugared water, which was given it to drink. On board ship, when kangaroos have been taken prisoners, they have willingly eaten almost anything, even to salt beef or old leather; but this must have been from necessity rather than choice.

"I have also heard that in the same circumstances they have been prevailed upon to drink wine or spirits, and that these poisonous drugs have been given them on purpose that the poor animals might stagger about and look ridiculous. Wasn't it too bad of the sailor-men to take advantage of their ignorance? But very likely it was only done to show how foolish and contemptible any creature looks when in a state of intoxication.

"Since you are so much interested in my relations, dear Mrs. Antelope, I mustn't forget to tell you of one who went to England and made his fortune, or rather his keeper's fortune, in a town called London. Have you ever heard of the place? When a kangaroo gets on really intimate and familiar

terms with a man, he is always willing to play a game at boxing with him, using those handy little front paws, which are sometimes called 'puds.' This uncle of mine, who was a really superior and well-educated person, became so expert in the game of boxing, that people were willing to pay money to see him do it. He was called the wonderful 'Boxing Kangaroo,' though, in point of fact, many more of us could have been shown to be quite as clever had we been brought into notice in the same way. However, my uncle claims to have earned, in the course of his professional career, the astonishing sum of twenty thousand pounds! How much of this money came to his share I have never been able to find out. Our gentlemen do not wear pockets, so perhaps that is the reason my uncle did not secure all this wealth for himself.

"Do you ask if the kangaroo ladies are the only ones who possess this convenient arrangement. Oh, dear, no! Pockets are all the fashion in our set—you would be quite singular without one. There's Mrs. Opossum, whatever she would do without a pouch I can't imagine. She would be in a worse plight than the famous old woman who lived in a shoe, for she generally has from twelve to sixteen children at a time, which are smaller even than mine, and born blind!

"Fancy having to hunt all over the place for a dozen babies no bigger than peas! But in her pocket they are snug and safe, and she always knows where to find them.

"Then there's Mrs. Kangaroo-Rat. She's really

—between ourselves! plain Mrs. Rat, but she does like a fine name. So she calls herself 'Kangaroo-Rat,' and, though no bigger than a rabbit, she tries to look as much like a kangaroo as possible, and jumps in the same way that we do.

"Then there's another of us—Mrs. Dasyure. I suppose, if she hadn't such an aristocratic name of her own, she would be calling herself Kangaroo-*Cat*, for she is not unlike a spotted puss. The native men of our country have given her a worse name still, for her black fur and fierce temper have earned her the title of 'Tasmanian Devil.'

"I once heard of a married couple of Dasyures who had been provided by a gentleman with a nice roomy cask in which to set up housekeeping; but their life was far from a happy one, for they slept all day and quarrelled and fought with one another all night. They are great flesh-eaters, and will even attack sheepfolds in their greed after raw meat.

"But I cannot stop to tell you how many ladies I know who wouldn't on any account be without a pocket. There's Mrs. Phalanger, who, I may just mention, has a very curious habit when she is startled or alarmed. She has a long tail, which she can clasp round the branch of a tree and hold tight with, and if she is suddenly disturbed, or supposes herself to be pursued, she will hang herself up by her tail, head downwards, to make believe she is dead, and will dangle in this uncomfortable position until she drops to the ground from fatigue.

"The phalangers are also remarkable for having on each of their hind feet a large strong thumb in

place of a fifth toe, which helps them very much in climbing the trees among the branches of which they live. Those phalangers have some near relations who are among the very few animals that can fly!

"Don't you believe me? You can't imagine wings covered with fur instead of feathers, do you say? They are not the shape of a bird's wings, certainly, and they are not separate from the body, but they answer many of the purposes of wings, I assure you. This 'wing' is a broad piece of loose skin, stretched between the front and back legs. When the phalanger takes a leap, this skin stretches out like a sail, and the creature floats easily through the air from tree-top to tree-top, often at great distances apart, without falling to the ground.

"A gentleman, I have been told, who saw these little animals for the first time, flying over his head, thought for a minute or two that they were dead leaves blown by the wind. They cannot fly upwards, however; they have to float in a descending direction. So they always leap from a high tree to a lower one, or to a lower branch of the tree, if it is higher than the one they start from. They are gentle and inoffensive—very different from the Dasyures—and feed delicately upon insects, honey, and the big blossoms of the gum trees; and they must have a very pleasant life, I should think, for they live in the green tree-tops, and seldom need to come to the ground.

"The wombats are also among the marsupials, as learned men call us folk with pouches. They are



"They are hands, not feet, and are meant to hold our food to our mouths, or to fight with."



"He can balance himself on the end of his tail alone, just for a moment, when he is fighting."

B.O.W.

as different as possible in their way of life from the flying phalanger, gambolling about against the blue sky, for these burrow in the earth and remain underground in the darkness all day, and come out only at night.

"The koalas like to have a taste of both sorts of residence; for in summer they live among the tree-tops, and in winter they hide in the warm earth. Mrs. Koala carries her children about on her back, and pretty little things they are, too."

"But one of the prettiest and funniest of our people is the little jerboa-kangaroo. It is like a kangaroo in miniature. It builds itself a nest at the foot of a bush, or under the shelter of a tuft of grass. While they are collecting materials to build this nest, they may be seen hopping about on their slender little hind legs with wisps of grasses held tightly in the curl of their tail, which is as useful as a hand for carrying small parcels.

"They are very clever at concealing the nest, scratching a hollow first of all to place it in, and then weaving the grasses so cunningly that they mix with those that are growing around, and few people would suspect anything hidden underneath. When Mr. and Mrs. Jerboa creep into their nest they pull the grass-blades after them, completely over the doorway, and curl themselves up in the middle, to sleep in safety. They sleep all day, and come out for food and fun when the twilight comes.

"But I'm sure, dear Mrs. Antelope, I've kept you long enough talking about us marsupials. Only you seemed as much surprised at my wearing a pouch as

I am at your being able to do without one, so I felt that I must let you know that I am not so entirely out of fashion as you thought. Remember, please, that the ladies of all the highly-genteel families I have mentioned to you invariably have their dresses made with pockets, and all of them, except the opossums, who are Americans, are natives of Australia."

A FARM-YARD COMPETITION.

IT was Rajah, the baker's horse, who really began it. He had been in the army at one time, and ridden by an officer. He was a fine fellow, with plenty of spirit in him still, though nobody would have guessed it until something happened to bring it out.

He was trotting through the village one fine summer morning, with the baker's man and a couple of well-filled baskets on his back. A new camp had lately been formed on the heather-clad common hard by, and a regiment of soldiers came marching along with a band of music in front of them, just as Rajah and his master were delivering the bread.

It was a bright picture, with all the smart red uniforms, and glittering buckles, and spotless belts. The men moved as one—like a huge and lively centipede—to the gay sound of the music. Heads were popped out of doors and windows everywhere, for the sight was in those parts a novel one, and boys and girls and babies ran by the side of the marching men.

But no one was so much excited as old Rajah He hadn't heard that merry tune for many a long year. It got into his ears, which pricked up smartly; it got into his heart, making it ready to burst with enthusiasm; it got into his heels, and off went Rajah, at a gallop, eager to take his old place at the head of the regiment.

The baker tugged, and shouted, and, I fear, even

said naughty words in his terror, for he thought he was being run away with. But Rajah heeded not. The bread-basket bumped and jolted, and the crisp brown loaves, "household" and "coburg," and twopenny rolls, leaped gaily out and trundled round until they settled themselves comfortably in the gutter or under the shelter of a wall. One portly and well-set-up "cottage" loaf flew over the fence at Farmer Mangold's, and plumped down in the middle of the stable-yard, to the great astonishment of the creatures that lived there.

Here—while by and by, Rajah, tired out and panting, was led back in disgrace to the common round of bread-carrying, and some of his scattered load was picked up by eager hands—this particular loaf so far changed its nature as to become a "bone of contention."

It clearly was a kind of windfall, that belonged to nobody in particular, and anybody had as much right to it as anybody else. The dog thought he ought to have it because he was big, and the mouse because he was small. The goose claimed that he had to get fat for Christmas, as he was to be the principal guest at the farmer's family-table on that day. The drake brought along his wife and hopeful son, with the plea that he had a family to provide for; and the rat—well, failing any reasonable argument, he just stood on his hind legs and tried to look beseeching.

The yellow cock was the only one who put in no special plea on his own behalf, for the very good reason that there was no occasion. "Possession is nine points of the law," it has been said, and he

continued to stand in front of the loaf and defy all comers.

The rival cock, though only a bantam, was very much upset by this behaviour and flew at the yellow cock, only to be driven off by superior strength. He began shouting his grievances at the top of his voice. But, unfortunately, no one understood his language. They only said, "There's that noisy bird at it again!" and came out to "shoo" him down from his perch and silence him.

Meanwhile the dog, who from being much in the company of his master had learned something of fairness and justice, was having a great argument on the subject with the yellow cock.

"It ought to be divided equally among all of us who were here when it came over the wall," he said.

"Hoh! And give that silly little mouse as large a piece as you would give to *me!* Cr-r-r-r-ck!" exclaimed the yellow cock with great disdain.

"Well, let the shares be in proportion to our size then," suggested the dog, willing to come to terms.

"Huh! So *you'd* be taking about twice as much as you'd hand over to ME! Cr-r-r-r-ck!"

"If I might have a word to say," squeaked the rat, "I believe I can see a way out of the difficulty."

The rat was known to have great experience in getting out of difficulties, so he was allowed to speak.

"I beg to suggest," he said, "that as we seem unable to agree as to the fair division of the loaf, it should be awarded as a prize for the best tale——"

"The best *tail!*" shrieked the duck. "Why, he'd take it himself, of course."

"I doubt it!" said the cock complacently.

The dog wagged his, and said nothing.

"I was going to say," proceeded the rat, "as a prize for the best tale which any of us shall tell about his own kind, for the instruction and entertainment of the company."

The idea was a novel one. Farmer Mangold had never yet provided any sort of interesting games for the inhabitants of his farm-yard, and their sole amusement hitherto had been quarrelling. The rat's proposal was met with clucks, and grunts, and gurgles of approval. There seemed a prospect of more fun than had been known in the farm-yard for many a day. It was put to the vote, and by a show of paws (and claws) was carried without a single objection.

Then came the question as to who should begin, and all at once the creatures realised that each would have something to do, as well as to enjoy, which for the moment they had quite forgotten. But for the desire to win the beautiful, sweet, golden-brown loaf, that smelled so inviting, and set all mouths watering, as it lay on the ground behind the yellow cock's fluffy body and formidable claws, I think several of them would then and there have backed out of their bargain.

However, they agreed that as the suggestion had come first of all from the rat, it was only fitting that he should start the game.

"His tale is sure to be pretty long," said the

duck, turning his own mistake into a very stale joke. "And it will give us time to collect our thoughts."

The rat sat up on his hind legs, twiddled his whiskers, and began thus:

"In the good old days, in a good old town called Hamelin, my ancestors held a position of wealth, honour, and renown. Their numbers were far in excess of those of the mere men and women of the place, and they were thought almost as much of as they deserved.

"All the property in the houses was looked upon as their own, and their courage and strength were such that they were victorious in battle over the dogs——"

An ominous growl from the kennel made the narrator jump, and he hastily added, "And there was a wholesale slaughter of the cats.

"To quote some one who has truthfully told the history of those glorious days," continued the rat—

"'They ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.'

"Ah, my friends, those good old times, I fear me, will come again no more!"

He paused to wipe away a tear, then proceeded:

"Such was the love and regard in which these

beautiful creatures were held by the townspeople, that the mayor and corporation went to vast expense and trouble to engage a musician to please the rats with his wonderful playing. The person chosen was famous for his skill, his enormous charges, and his peculiar style of clothes, as he always wore a suit that was red all down one half and yellow all down the other. His sole object was to charm the most important people in Hamelin with his exquisite music. Ah, sirs, those were piping times, indeed!

"Well, he commenced playing, and I have been told by my great-great-great-grandfather, who heard it from his great-great-great-grandmother, that the sounds of that pipe were exactly like the scraping of tripe, the squeezing of ripe apples in cider presses, the creaking of pantry doors left ajar, the drawing of the corks from oil flasks, and all the most pleasant and musical sounds in the world. And the rats were so delighted that they came out by hundreds and thousands — old and young, big and little, black, brown, and gray — and followed the wonderful piper.

"But now," continued the rat, "there occurred a dreadful accident, which the people of Hamelin would have given worlds to prevent had they foreseen it in time. The piper was so taken up with playing to such a grand audience, and so flattered by their attention, that in an absent-minded sort of way he, without noticing where he was going, walked straight into the river, and the rats one and all followed him. Followed, and—were—drowned!"

The rat waited a few moments for exclamations of horror and grief, but, as none were forthcoming, he continued: "The townspeople were full of sorrow at the sad fate of their beloved rats, and the mayor and corporation showed their anger at the piper's blunder by refusing to pay him for his services. The children of the place, too, were so heart-broken at the loss of the playful little animals that had been so friendly and companionable, sharing their cots at night and their cakes by day, that in despair they, in a body, followed the piper as the rats had done, hoping to be taken where the rats had gone.

"But just as he was nearing the river, that stupid piper, out of his mind with remorse, no doubt, at the terrible disaster he had brought about, turned aside, and made for a great hill that rose not far from Hamelin town. He plunged into a cave that suddenly opened in front of him, and the children, following him, still in hope of finding the rats, disappeared from view, and the cave's entrance closed behind them. All but one, a lame boy, who could not follow the piper as fast as the rest, and thus got left behind.

"This is how the town of Hamelin lost its merry and thriving population of rats, and it was many years, my great-great-great-grandfather told me, before the townspeople got over their grief."

The rat having concluded, sat up, and washed his face, as is the custom of rats, with his front paws, and trimmed his whiskers, with an air of great self-satisfaction.

"Who comes after the rat?" asked the mouse, who, being the smallest present, was bursting with eagerness to show off what he could do.

"Why, the dog, of course, pretty quick!" clucked the cock. But his joke was felt to be in bad taste, and no one smiled.

"Mr. Rat's tale has reminded me of a splendid story about *my* ancestors," said the mouse.

"Fire away, then," said the dog, "and don't be too long-winded."

"There's nothing the matter with my lungs!" retorted the mouse, rather huffily. "I'm neither long nor short-winded. I'm well aware that the uncommon musical talents possessed by certain members of our family, who are called 'singing-mice,' have been said by jealous and spiteful persons to be caused by some disease; but that is a wicked libel. Our vocalists only wish to convince the public that we can, if we will, sing as well, and, indeed, far better, than the birds which are made such an absurd fuss with, so that the cruel persecution which we suffer may cease, and that we may be fed, cherished, and protected as canaries and linnets are. Perhaps you will allow me to give you an example——"

"No! no! A story! a story! This is not a singing competition!" cried the goose. And "Story! story!" echoed all the others.

So the mouse had to begin:

"Once upon a time, in a town somewhere in Germany, there lived a very rich farmer. He owned broad fields, and every field was covered with

waving golden corn. Among the corn-stalks lived many and many a tiny brown field-mouse, in her beautiful little nest, compact and round as a ball, and so neatly contrived that no one but Mrs. Mouse herself could ever find the door. When harvest-time came, and the fields were reaped, hundreds of grains fell to the ground for the mice, but the greater part of the corn was carried away by the farmer's men, and stored in his barns.

"But one year there was a very poor harvest. There was scarcely any corn seen in that part of the country but what belonged to the rich man, and he had not nearly as much as usual. He told his labourers to look after every ear of corn that dropped in the reaping, so that very little was left for the gleaners. And when they had been through the fields none at all was left for the mice, so that many of them were starved, and died. Still, the rich man had so much grain stored from other years, that his barns were full to overflowing as before.

"Then the villagers came with their pence and tried to buy the rich man's corn to grind and make themselves bread. But he knew that there would by and by be a famine over all the land, when his store would be worth almost its weight in gold. So he refused the poor people's money, and kept his corn.

"They came again and again, for their families were starving, offering him more and more, but it was not as much as he hoped to get, and still he turned them away.

"Then the clergyman of the village came, and offered all the money he possessed, and earnestly begged the rich man to be merciful, and pointed to the thin, pale faces of the little children, and even went down on his knees to plead for them. But prices were rising higher and higher in the towns and villages around, and the greedy farmer knew that in the end he would be able to sell his hoarded corn for ten times as much as even the clergyman could give.

"'There are thousands of ravenous mice in this place,' said the clergyman. 'They are already getting at your store. Would you rather they ate it up than that the hungry poor should have it?'

"'Yes, I would!' roared the rich man, now very angry. 'The mice may eat what they like; the poor you pester me so about shall not have a grain.'

"'The mice *will* eat what they like before this time to-morrow!' answered the clergyman, in a strange, quiet voice. And then he went his way.

"But the farmer bethought him of the clergyman's hint, and at once engaged a number of bricklayers to stop up every hole in his barns with cement, so that the mice could no longer creep in to steal. It was done by night-fall, and, well contented, the rich man went to bed.

"In the gray dawn, however, he was awakened by a strange noise. A squeaking and cheeping, a rustling and hustling, a whispering and scraping and pattering. He got up and looked out of his window. The road beneath was a moving mass.

A countless myriad of mice, famished and desperate, were hurrying along from the sealed-up barn to the farmer's own house.

"They scaled the walls by one accord—not a single mouse went past, or turned aside. They squeezed in at the windows, they crept under the doors, they poured in a gray stream down the chimney and out over the floor, and from every point they each and all made straight for one spot — the four-post bed on which the shivering and quaking farmer lay, with the clothes all pulled over his head to hide from the avenging army.

"But it was of no use. By hundreds, and thousands, and millions they came. And they conquered. When morning broke, all that was left of the wicked rich man was a few clean-picked bones."

The mouse's tiny voice ceased, and his hearers drew sighs of relief.

"They should have had *me* there!" growled the dog; "I'd have *moused* them."

"What! You'd never have fought for such a bad man!" screamed the rat and the mouse together, for the thought of that sealed-up corn had roused their strongest feelings.

"Bad man or good, if he was my master, I should have stood by him to the death," answered Rollo firmly. "Any dog would."

"Do let's have a cheerful story next!" begged the goose, who was stout and sentimental.

"Let's have something *English*, and something *true!*" said Rollo, who was a bulldog.

"If I might be allowed," observed the drake, coming nearer to the front as gracefully as he could, "I should like to say now how heartily I agree with what our friend, Mr. Rollo, has said about the courage and faithfulness of his kind. Personally, I have the greatest respect for dogs. My own foster-mother was a terrier."

Several of the audience looked surprised at this. And the drake continued:

"Yes, my earliest and tenderest recollections are of the kind black nose, and warm pink tongue, and the big, comfortable, hairy body against which we all — some five of us, orphans — used to snuggle so cosily.

"This benevolent lady—Gip, her name was—had been cruelly bereaved of her young family a few days before our own sad loss, and it seemed to be a sort of comfort to her to bestow upon us all the loving care she would have given to her puppies had they been spared to her. Finding us in our motherless and neglected state, she carried us off, one by one, very gently, to her straw-carpeted kennel,. and tended us there until we were able to look after ourselves.

"Well do I remember one sunny summer morning, when the eldest of us said: 'Brothers, I must away! Down yonder slope I see a gleam, flashing, sparkling, rippling in the light. It tells of coolness to the feet, of liquid for the beak, of riding at ease on something that is neither earth nor air, and of the luscious worm that wriggles in the soft mud. Brothers, follow me, and be happy!'

"We did follow him, as fast as our little webbed feet would go, across the farm-yard, and over the grass, then, with a run, down a moist bank, and—oh, the delight of it!—we were swimming about in a fine large pond. I cannot tell you how delicious the feeling was.

"But all at once we heard a pitiful wail. There, on the shore, stood our dear foster-mother Gip, lifting her head to the sky, and crying, 'Oh, my children—my pretty little fluffy babes! I know they will all be drowned!' The next minute she had plunged in after us, and catching us one after another in her mouth, but without hurting us in the least, she, as she thought, rescued us from our danger, and bore us back to the safety of the kennel.

"It was of no use, however, for poor dear Gip to fancy that she could keep young ducks out of the water. Sorry as we were to distress her, we felt that swim we must, or die; so she learned by experience that we did not get drowned, and by degrees she became reconciled to our excursions on the pond."

"How very extraordinary," murmured the yellow cock, as the duck paused, "for a *dog* to care for a *duck*."

"Not at all," snapped the drake quickly, for there was a certain amount of contempt in the cock's tone.

"I could tell you many stories of the same kind. There seems to be a mutual sympathy and admiration between the duck and the dog—both such

noble, handsome, and intelligent creatures—both so highly valued by mankind."

"Dear me!" muttered Rollo to himself, "anybody would think our master always had a duck to go with him on his walks, and liked to have two or three of them lying on the rug in front of the parlour fire."

"An aunt of my own," continued the drake, "took a great liking to a beautiful spaniel that had rescued her from the jaws of a fox. As the dog performed this act of bravery at the risk of his own life, I have no doubt that it was an instance, on both sides, of love at first sight. I know, at least in my aunt's case, that this was the one passion of her existence, for she forsook all her relations and followed her hero wherever he went.

"Alas! she was misunderstood. Again and again was she driven away from him, and sent back to her proper place. But she persisted in sitting close to the gate, gazing all day upon the object of her affection, whose kennel was just within sight. At last the farmer took pity on the poor love-sick lady, and let her free to do as she liked.

"She at once hurried to the side of the dog, and never left him day or night, except to be fed. Even then she would gobble up her food as fast as ever she could, and at once return to her friend. She never, however, attempted to enter the dog's kennel, but was quite content to sit outside. If he happened to make remarks, as he frequently did, about the impertinence or ill appearance of strangers who came through the farm-yard, she would agree with



"And pretty little things they are, too."

every word he said, cackling when he barked, and running after the intruders to try to bite their heels. Once, when the dog fell sick, my aunt watched him like the most devoted nurse, and would not leave him even to get food. If a pan of corn had not been placed by the kennel for her, she would have starved to death.

"Another duck I heard of——"

"Oh, come now!" interrupted the goose. "You've told two stories already, when one each is the game. It isn't fair. It's my turn now."

"Yes! Let's hear the goose's story," cried several voices at once.

"I only wished to add," insisted the drake, craning his neck forward so as to be heard, "that it is no doubt the depth of affection, the constancy, the tenderness, the unselfish devotion—the—the—in fact, all those noblest qualities of heart and mind which the duck possesses, that causes it to be held —as I remarked before — in such high esteem by mankind——"

("Duck and green peas!" murmured Rollo, in an aside.)

"—that no greater compliment can be paid by a lover to his lady, no fonder term of doting pride in a mother for her baby, than to call them 'little ducks.'"

"Ugh!" said Rollo, as the duck rolled up his eyes, and concluded with an air of deep feeling. "Now, then, Mother Goose."

"I won't," commenced the goose, "attempt to take advantage of the company by compelling

them to listen to *two* stories. I shall honestly and fairly confine myself to one, in accordance with the rules of the competition. I shall not say a word about the cleverness of the goose, as proved by the experience of the dairymaid, who tried to make a goose hatch some duck eggs along with her own, and how the goose found out the fraud at once, and threw every one of the strange eggs out of the nest, and how the maid tried it again, mixing the eggs more cunningly than before, and how again the goose detected and discarded them.

"I shall not even speak of the touching history of the kind and faithful goose who used to take his blind mistress to church every Sunday morning, holding the corner of her apron in his beak and carefully leading her through the meadows, along the high road, and even over a plank bridge across a stream, putting her on the rail side, and himself walking between her and the water. No, much as I should like to dwell upon these pleasing tales, showing, as they do, the intelligence and faithfulness of my people, I will proceed at once with the story of the noble and kind-hearted goose who protected his little friend, the sparrow.

"This tiny bird, trusting in the goodness of creatures so much larger than itself, was hopping about among a number of geese one day, picking up stray grains of corn without the least fear of being hurt. Indeed, the huge and noble birds were quite pleased to see the little thing enjoying itself, and smilingly looked on while it ate its fill.

"But another creature, of a different disposition, was likewise watching the sparrow. Up in the sky a cruel hawk had for some time fixed his keen eyes upon the wee bird. Mr. Hawk considered that sparrow stuffed with corn would be a dainty dish, and waited while the sparrow filled out its little sides. As soon as the hawk thought that the stuffing was complete, swoop! down he came through the air, straight for the sparrow, with his eyes gleaming, and his sharp beak and talons ready for his prey.

"Like a flash he snatched up the little sparrow, who thought that his last moment had come. But there was another flash—a spreading of great, white wings and the dart of a strong yellow beak at the marauder. A gander had come to the rescue! The hawk, stunned by the blow, fell senseless, and the sparrow fluttered unharmed from his claws."

As the goose finished her tale, and settled herself upon one leg, amid a round of applause, it was noticed that the half-grown duckling was being pushed to the front by his fond mamma. "Go on Quackie, dear," she was saying in a whisper, intended to be heard by everybody. "Don't be shy. Your story is as good as any other, and if you turn your toes out and speak up, and mind your stops, you've as good a chance of the prize as anybody."

"Come along, my dear," said the dog encouragingly. "So you've got a tale to tell us, eh?"

"It was something funny that happened to a

friend of mine," murmured the duckling, with downcast eyes.

"That's right! Let's hear it!" said the goose. "I always like to notice youthful efforts."

"Well, it was like this, you know," said the duckling, plucking up courage from so much kindness, "young Waddles, my chum, somehow got his leg broken, and the lady he belongs to fastened some sticks to it and bound it up tight with bits of rag. I suppose she meant it kindly, for she is a good-hearted sort of person. But it did seem queer that she should go and shut poor Waddles up in prison, as if it wasn't bad enough to have a lame leg, without being punished for it! She kept him in by putting him under a huge cage-like sort of thing, made of wooden rails, and although she set it on a patch of green grass, poor Waddles was very unhappy.

"We all went to see him and to condole with him, of course. We poked our heads through the bars of the cage, and told him how sorry we were, and called his cruel mistress all the names we could think of, but it didn't seem to help him a bit.

"So then the oldest of us advised going away and taking counsel of a wise old drake that we knew. He, when we told him of the difficulty, said, 'Gather together every duck you can find —big and little, old and young—and we'll go in a body and see if we can't set poor Waddles free, somehow.'

"So we managed to collect a crowd of over

forty ducks, and we marched in a mass to the prison, with the drake at our head, and surrounded it.

"'Now, then,' said our leader, 'everybody put his head under the lowest bar, and when I say "Go!" lift it for all you're worth.'

"This they did. I wasn't big enough to help, so I could only look on. Those ducks strained every nerve; but in vain. The cage would not move.

"'Stop a minute; I've another plan,' said the drake, who had a head on his neck if ever a bird had. 'All come to one side. Now, then, all the biggest to the front, and do as I do.'

"Four or five of the largest and strongest in the crowd came forward, and, with the drake, put their heads under the bottom bar of the cage again.

"'Now, all you others push up behind,' said the drake. 'Push your very hardest, and *all together!* Now, then. One — two — three! —O-o-o-f!'

"Over went the cage, and Waddles was free.

"You should have just heard the cheers! I never heard such a quacking in all my life, and nobody else in the yard ever had, either, and Waddles limped off in the midst of his good friends, the happiest duck in the world."

"Well done, youngster!" said his father. And "Well done!" was echoed by several others of the audience. They all thought it was uncommonly good for a first attempt.

"Now, then, Mr. Rollo?" said the yellow cock, "let us hear your story."

"After you," replied the dog politely. "I will tell my story last, if you please."

"When does *mine* come in?" inquired the green-and-gold bantam cock, who was again perched on the fence.

"You can come after me," said the yellow cock; adding in an aside, "if you care to, when mine is done."

The yellow cock was the larger of the two, and his rival did not think it well to argue the point.

"Once upon a time," began the yellow cock in a loud and defiant voice, "there was a green-and-gold bantam cock who had two pretty wives."*

Here the fowl on the fence nearly tumbled off, but managed to regain his balance.

"One of the wives was called Dainty, and the other Puff." Here the rival cock shifted from one foot to the other, and turned his tail towards the farm-yard.

"All three lived happily together in a little house to themselves, and the hens each laid an egg every day. Dainty and Puff were too much of ladies to be expected to hatch their own eggs, so these were taken, when enough of them had been laid, and given into the care of quite a common person in the farm-yard behind a hedge, with instructions to do her duty by them.

"But Madame Dainty didn't like this plan at all. She said that as she laid her own eggs, she

* Adapted from "The Soul of a Cat," by Margaret Benson. London: W. Heinemann.

would prefer to hatch them. So she went away and placed her daily egg in a nest she found for herself in the shrubbery. Here, by and by, she settled herself upon them.

"While she was away, the cock one day heard cheerful sounds of a mother and family behind the hedge, and going round to see what it was, he found his wives' nurse surrounded by a brood of chickens—*his* children, of course.

"He warmly praised the nurse for her cleverness in having turned a dozen plain, white, uninteresting eggs into twelve pretty fluffy little chicks, and sat down by the coop to talk to her.

"They had such a pleasant time together that morning, that the cock got into the habit of going and squatting by this common hen's side every day, all forgetful of both Puff and Dainty.

"By and by the nurse and her foster-brood were allowed their liberty, and then it was seen what plans had been made in those long quiet mornings when the hen was in the coop, and the chickens' father by her side. For both of them flew away together to an adjoining wood, where they were seen and recognised by passers-by, sitting side by side on the bough of a tree!

"Meanwhile, Mrs. Dainty had hatched out a very pretty brood, but the first family, left in charge of the unfaithful nurse, had all died of neglect. When their wicked and unkind father grew tired of a wild life and came home again, eight sturdy little sons were ready to meet him, and to avenge on him the wrongs of their deserted

mother. He had a warm time of it for a few days, and then he was disposed of by his mistress, and came to live—— Why, dear me! what has become of my friend? I thought I saw him on the fence just now?"

No one answered. The saucy bantam, overcome with shame at this revelation of the wickedness of his past life, had disappeared, and was hiding his blushing comb in some quiet corner of the stable-loft. But no one applauded either, for all felt that such tale-telling was a "low down trick," and prompted only by a spirit of mean and jealous rivalry.

The bantam cock thus out of the way, there remained but one competitor, the dog, to entertain the company. Raising himself upon his haunches, and swelling out his chest, Rollo, with becoming dignity, commenced:

"I have listened with very great interest, as I am sure all our friends have, to the many delightful stories that we have been told. They are tales which, in the main, have proved the cleverness, the courage, the kindliness, or"—here he paused impressively—"the vanity and vice of the various creatures whose kindred are here before us. But one thing, my friends, has surprised and pained me, and that is the very little that has been said about our lord and master, the giver of all good things, our friend and monarch, MAN!"

The cock crowed faintly in approval, and the goose and ducks uttered sounds which meant sympathy with the remark Rollo had just uttered.

Only the rat and the mouse remained silent, perhaps because they did not know much about the goodness and benevolence of the human race.

"Not one of the stories to which we have had the pleasure of listening," continued the dog, "shows any appreciation of the great benefits we daily receive at the hands of the lord of us all, or illustrates any effort to make grateful return to him for his kindness. But, my friends, I venture to proclaim before you all, that MAN is the god of the dog, and in his service a good and conscientious dog ever finds his highest joy. My aim, then, shall be to show how sagacity, generosity, self-forgetful heroism, and devoted affection may all be used, not for the benefit of self, but to the honour and pleasure of our benefactor, and to the doing of his will.

"No member, perhaps, of our noble race is more useful to man than the collie, or sheep-dog. In Scotland especially, as well as on the Yorkshire moors, and among the hills and dales of Derbyshire, the shepherd finds his most useful servant and his best friend in the collie dog.

"The collie knows every individual of his master's flock as well, or better than the owner himself. He will pick them out from among hundreds of others without making a mistake. He will seek for the lost though it may have wandered miles away from its fellows, and, all by himself, will gather the flock together that has been scattered over the mountains, and bring them home without losing one. He understands every word that is

said to him—though this is a gift of nearly all dogs, much more than their owners generally suppose; and he will be faithful to his duty and to his master, even unto death.

"I knew a collie some years ago, whose name was Jock. He belonged to a shepherd whose name was Donald. (You may not be aware, my friends, that a dog knows his owner's name, and the different names of the members of the household to which he belongs, as well as he does his own.) On one occasion Donald was coming home on a dark evening, and putting his foot unexpectedly in a deep rut, fell down and broke his leg. Night was coming on, and the snow falling heavily, yet he could not move from the ground, much less stand or walk.

"The case was desperate, and poor Donald would probably have been frozen to death before help came, but Jock was with him. Pulling off one of his worsted cuffs, Donald dipped it in the blood that was flowing from his wound, and gave it to Jock, saying, 'Take this straight home, and go indoors to my wife. Don't let any one stop you! Go straight to her, and fetch me help.'

"Jock, of course, understood every word. He seized the cuff and tore home like the wind. Several people in the village tried to catch him, but he got away from them and made straight for Donald's cottage. Then he scratched and cried at the door until some one let him in, and he ran straight to his master's wife, and dropped the cuff in her lap, whining piteously. Of course, Mrs. Donald at once

recognised the cuff, and got some men together, who, led back by Jock, went to the shepherd's aid and saved his life.

"Some time after this, Donald was ordered by his employer to take a flock of nearly four hundred sheep through a town to a ferry, and get them across to the other side of the river.* When they were passing through the town something frightened them, and the panic spreading through the flock, the whole lot fled, a dozen different ways, through the crowded streets.

"Jock, of course, was sent to fetch them, and he collected every one and brought them back to his master. But when Donald came to count them over, instead of three hundred and seventy-six, he only made the number three hundred and seventy-five, 'Jock, my boy,' he said, 'they're not all here!' Off again flew faithful Jock; but as it was a mistake the shepherd had made, up and down the streets and alleys the poor fellow ran, but no lost sheep could he find. Yet he believed his master's word, and would not go back without the stray one that he had been sent to fetch.

"The shepherd waited as long as he dared, but having counted again and found out his mistake, he got the sheep on to the ferry boat, and went across without Jock, for he knew his employer would be expecting them on the other side.

"Meanwhile, poor Jock, unsuccessful, ashamed of himself, footsore, and hungry, returned at last

* Founded upon part of the true story of "Wully," "Wild Animals I have Known," by Ernest Thompson Seton. London: David Nutt.

to the spot where he had left Donald and the flock, only to find them all gone, and himself left behind. Whimpering with loneliness, he, too, made for the ferry, and crossed over, but by that time the shepherd and the flock were miles on their way to the moors. Quite bewildered, Jock recrossed to the side he had started from, and waited there, smelling everybody who came over the river, in the hope of meeting his master coming back.

"For days he waited and watched, refusing food that was offered him, and thinking only of meeting every boat and smelling every person that landed from it. He couldn't believe, poor faithful fellow, but that some time his master would come back for him. Some one who saw Jock at the ferry reckoned that he must have smelled the legs of at least five thousand people every day, for the ferry was at a very busy spot, and the boat was constantly going across and back again. For some days Jock was too anxious and unhappy to eat the food which kind-hearted persons offered him, and he grew gaunt and haggard. But, at last, sheer starvation drove him to accept their bounty. He ate the food, but he steadfastly refused to attach himself to anybody.

"Thus, for two years, Jock remained homeless; for illness and troubles of various kinds prevented Donald from returning to that part of the country, and he never dreamed that the most faithful friend he ever had was daily watching and waiting for him. In all that time, persons who noticed Jock and took an interest in him never knew him to miss the incoming of a single boat, or to fail to examine,

with his keen scent, the clothing of every man who landed from it!

"At last, one day, a shepherd came off from the boat, wearing—for it was winter time—a great gray muffler round his neck and body, and knitted worsted cuffs.

"As soon as Jock smelled him he began to growl, and the man being rather alarmed, raised his stick to drive the dog away. 'Don't you hurt our dog!' shouted one of the men belonging to the ferry, for they had all grown very fond of Jock, although he would not respond much to their advances. 'All right!' answered the man, 'but he seems more likely to hurt me!'

"Jock, however, having examined the cuffs and comforter as closely as he could, began to wag his tail for the first time since his great loss, and fawned upon this stranger as he had done to no one else in all the two years. So the man began to ask questions about him, and when he heard Jock's story, he said, 'Well, 'tis strange enough! Old Donald was a friend of mine, and when he died, poor chap! his wife gave me his muffler and cuffs. Now, it seems, I'm to have his old dog too! Come along, Jock! Come along with me, old fellow! You shall live with me, and look after my sheep.'

"He patted Jock's rough head with the hand that wore the Donald-smelling cuff, and Jock, thinking that if he could not have his dear old master back, the next best thing would be to go with somebody who at least had known him, licked it, and agreed. So he went home with the shepherd who

had been Donald's friend, and served him faithfully for Donald's sake."

All the creatures agreed that Rollo's story was first-rate, and that the dog is the happiest animal upon earth, because he worships and serves a good master, and is loved and trusted by him, instead of living only for himself and his own pleasure.

Now, all the competitors having told their tales, came the question of awarding the prize.

"But who is to be umpire?" asked the rat, who was always pretty sharp. "None of us can, who have competed."

Nobody had thought of this.

"We ought to have had the master here to listen," said Rollo. "He would have been sure to decide right."

"Put it to the vote!" suggested the drake.

"Your wife and child would have no votes, you know," rejoined the dog. "There might be a danger of unfairness in favour of one person."

"O-oh!" said the duck. "Then I shan't vote at all."

"Suppose we call Mr. Bantam," suggested the mouse, for he and the poultry were always good friends. "He's just behind the fence, and he has heard all the stories from beginning to end."

"Shouldn't think of such a thing!" screamed the yellow cock, who knew very well in that case whose story would *not* get the prize. "A person who is capable of behaving in the disgraceful way that—that some people are, would be a most unfit umpire in this important competition."

"Let the prize be given to the longest tale," suggested the rat.

"The dog's was the longest," squeaked the mouse.

"No, it wasn't," snapped the rat.

"All the ducks' tales should be put together and counted as one. That's only fair," said the drake.

"Can't I have the prize, mother?" whimpered Quackie. "I do want the prize. Can't I, mother? I want the prize. I wa-a-nt the prize!" and he began to cry.

"Stop that brat's noise," growled the dog. "Or *I* will!"

"Disagreeable brute!" retorted the duck-mother, with indignation; "if you had any generosity in you —if *any* of them had!—they'd give poor dear little Quackie the prize just to encourage him."

"Shut up, you old stupid," hissed her husband.

"Shut up yourself," retorted his spouse. "Quackie's tale was as good as anybody's, and considering his age——"

"I wa-ant the prize! I wa-a-nt the prize!" yelled the duckling, flapping his little wings in excitement.

By this time there was a pretty good hubbub in the farm-yard. Every creature was clamouring for his own way. Only the dog remained calm and dignified.

"Look behind you," he suddenly said to the yellow cock, who was engaged in an angry squabble with the rat. "Where's the prize *now*?"

A sudden hush fell upon the noisy wranglers. Anxiously they peered behind the cock to where the loaf of bread, cause of the whole quarrel, had been lying in the shadow of a heap of straw.

It was no longer there!

A dozen yards away, the yellow cock's entire family, consisting of seven hens and over thirty chickens, were industriously pecking at several large pieces of delicious-looking new bread. While everybody's attention had been taken up with the row that followed the story-telling, the oldest and most cunning of the hens had succeeded in pulling the loaf to pieces, and carrying it to a safe distance, to be eaten up by themselves and their little ones.

As there was no umpire, and no hope of arriving at any satisfactory decision as regarded the competition, the fact that there was no longer any prize to award put a finishing touch to the proceedings.

The dog laughed, and curled himself round for an afternoon nap; the goose waddled off in stately displeasure; the ducks felt they had been quite long enough out of the water; while the rat and the mouse hurried to the spot where the loaf had first been broken, in the hope of picking up stray crumbs.

"Seems I have come off best of 'em all!" said the yellow cock to himself. "I only wanted it for the old ladies and the youngsters, and they've got it. Here goes for the top of the fence. Cock-a-doodle-*do-o-o!*"



B.O.W.

"Flew at the yellow cock, only to be driven off by superior strength"

A CHAT ABOUT BEARS.

THE nursery at the Rylands was unusually quiet, one afternoon last winter, for Eric was painting, Cyril reading a new book, and Ella very much absorbed in trimming a hat for her doll. Their governess, Miss Matheson, was very glad of this, as she wanted to write a long letter.

The street outside was quiet also, for the milkman had gone past, and the muffin-man had not yet come. But all at once there was the sound of a flute, and an indistinct murmur of children's voices.

It came nearer. No particular air was being played, but a general "jig-joggetty" sort of tune, as Eric called it, which suggested dancing, and Eric ran to the window to see what it was.

"It's a bear—a dancing-bear!" exclaimed the boy. "I've read about them in books, but I've never seen one before in my life. Cyril, I say, come and look. It's such a big one."

"Don't, Cyril. *I* shan't," said Ella very decidedly.

"Why not?" asked Eric.

"I've heard that they teach them to dance in such a cruel way—by making them jump about on hot iron. I can't bear to look."

"That's not true, I know," said Eric.

"But it is, isn't it, Miss Matheson?" said Ella, appealing to the governess, who had looked up from her writing.

"I am not sure. I hope not; but I am afraid

that performing animals are not always taught their tricks entirely by kindness," she replied.

"But you can do ever so much more by kindness than in any other way," insisted Eric. He was still looking out of the window, for the great tawny creature, towering above the head of his keeper, was now just opposite the house.

"I think that bear must be happy with his keeper," he continued, "for I'm sure he could get away if he wanted to, he's only held by a little string. And he looks as if he finds it quite easy to walk on his hind legs."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Cyril, drawn at last away from his book. "Their hind legs are so strong and the soles of their feet are so big and flat that they can walk upright just as well as not, and carry things at the same time. Don't you remember there's a picture in our old scrap-book of a bear walking on his hind legs over a tree-trunk that has fallen across a stream, and carrying a dead horse in his front paws at the same time? Just think of the strength it needs to do such a thing as that."

"A policeman has come and made him move on—what a shame," said Eric, from behind the window-curtain.

"I expect he thought of the horses," said Cyril. "They are so frightened of bears that the very smell nearly sends some of them out of their minds."

"I'm glad the policeman has made them go," said Ella. "I wish he would take the poor bear

away from that man altogether. I know he's cruel. He had a whip."

"Ella would like to bring the bear up here, and make a pet of it, and feed it on bread and milk," said Eric, laughing. "Fancy a pet bear!"

"A full-grown grizzly would be rather large for a parlour pet," said Miss Matheson, who had just folded up her letter, "and much too fierce to tame. But the young of most animals respond to kindness. Baby-bears are the funniest little things. They toddle round on their little hind legs, looking for all the world like very fat little boys in suits of fur. They sit on the ground with their chubby legs straight out in front of them, almost exactly as small children do, and use their fore paws as hands.

"Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, in his delightful book, 'The Lives of the Hunted,'* gives an account of a little bear who, with his mother, used to haunt the neighbourhood of a hotel in Yellowstone Park, in America, to pick up pieces from a heap of garbage. The hotel folk called this little bear Johnny, and a most laughable description is given of his adventures with some jam and golden syrup tins, for bears are extraordinarily fond of all sweet things. Would you like to hear the story?"

"Yes! yes!" cried the children, clapping their hands. "Do tell about it!"

"Well, you must know that Mr. Seton, who is a great naturalist, and a still greater lover of

* Published by David Nutt, London.

animals, was so anxious to see these and other bears of that region feeding, that he dug a hole in the heap of refuse, and got into it to hide."

"Into the refuse?" cried Ella, making a wry face of disgust.

"Yes, actually. People who are very much in earnest don't mind what they endure to gain their ends. So, for a whole day, this gentleman sat with his camera, all among the stale cabbage-leaves and potato-peelings, and empty fruit and preserved meat tins.

"Among other visitors came little Johnny with his fond mother. And I must tell you that bear mothers are very fond, although they do not fail to spank their cubs soundly if the little ones are not obedient. Johnny soon found a large syrup can with plenty of luscious sweetness still hanging about the bottom and sides. A bigger bear with a longer tongue could have licked it clean, but Johnny's tongue was too short to reach all round.

"However, he was not to be done. In went his little furry arm, up to the elbow, wiped round the inside of the tin, and came out to be industriously licked! Then in went the other, to be served the same, until the syrup tin was perfectly clean, and Johnny's black arms, from much licking, looked as if he were wearing black silk gloves."

"Miss Matheson! Why, he was as sensible as a child would have been. Just think of it!"

"And he could show all the temper of a child too," continued the governess, "and a very naughty one; for another tin having a much larger opening,

Johnny thrust his head into it, and joyfully licked down to the very join around the bottom. But when he wanted to pull his head out, lo and behold! he found himself in a fix, for the can would not move, and Johnny feared he was doomed to go about in a tin hat and muzzle combined for the rest of his life."

"That's just what our cat once did with a milk jug," said Cyril; "but she soon got free, for she dashed the jug on the scullery stones until it broke."

"Of course a tin would not break, and the little bear screamed and scratched for a long time before he succeeded in shaking off the tiresome thing. Then, just like a passionate, foolish little child who gets angry with anything that hurts it, this bear-cub set to and hammered the offending tin with his paws till it was perfectly flat.

"The same writer, Mr. Thompson Seton, in another of his books, tells of a pet bear-cub called 'Jacky.' Now, Jacky, like all bears, was very fond of honey."

"They catch them in some places with honey and spirits, Miss Matheson," said Cyril. "It was mentioned in a temperance lecture we had at school, as a sort of illustration. They all come flocking to eat the honey, and the spirit makes them 'drunk and incapable.' But first of all they get very excited, and dance about, like intoxicated men sometimes do. Then, in the end, they fall down in a deep sleep, and so are caught."

"What do people want to catch them for?"

asked Ella. "The grown-up ones, I mean. Are they any good?"

"Why, yes! Their fur makes fine rugs, and even coats, in cold countries. And I've heard that bear hams are delicious. And in some places their paws are eaten too, aren't they, Miss Matheson?"

"I've heard so, but I can't say that I have ever seen, much less tasted them. The fat also used to be melted down to make 'bear's grease,' which years ago was considered a very fine pomatum for the hair, as well as of value as an ointment for tumours. But I don't suppose there is any demand for it now."

"Would Jacky be the same kind of bear as that one the man brought round here just now?" asked Eric.

"No, I think not," said Miss Matheson. "The cubs Mr. Thompson Seton speaks of were the young of the American black bear. Your dancing friend was the brown bear, which inhabits all the mountainous parts of Europe. It is generally larger than the black bear, and fiercer, though bears as a rule do not attack human beings unless very hungry, or pursued. Their favourite food is berries and wild fruits, but if these fail, it will then attack either sheep or cattle.

"One writer, I remember, says that when a bear kills a sheep, he skins it cleverly, and leaves the pelt (as an animal's coat is called) rolled up into a neat bundle! But others give him a very bad character, saying that he is cruel for the love of it,

and mauls and tears more sheep than he wants to eat."

"There are no bears in England now, are there?" asked Ella.

"There have been none here for many hundreds of years; but in Scotland, as late as 1057, a member of the Gordon family was directed by the king to carry three bears' heads on his banner, in memory of his having killed a very fierce bear that had been the terror of the country at that time. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, bears were brought over from the continent expressly to amuse the fine lords and ladies by fighting savage dogs in the bear-garden at Southwark."

"How brutal and hateful people used to be," exclaimed Cyril. "I can't understand anybody thinking it amusing to see any creature in pain. But I know some boys who still think teasing and torturing a helpless thing quite funny. Isn't it cowardly and detestable?"

"Indeed, Cyril, I agree with you," said Miss Matheson warmly. "No name is too bad for such cowardly wretches. A love of cruelty, or even indifference to it, shows a nature of the lowest and vilest type."

"Is it true, Miss Matheson," asked Eric, "that bears eat nothing, all through the winter? I fancy I've read somewhere that they don't."

"In their natural state I believe they are hibernating creatures; that is, they eat enough in the summer to last them until the spring-time comes again."

"Miss Matheson," said Eric suddenly, "are bears good climbers?"

"I believe," said Miss Matheson, "that a bear can scale the face of an almost perpendicular cliff as easily as a cat. The best-tempered bear, by the way, seems to be the sun bear, as it is called, whose native countries are Sumatra and Borneo. The great explorer, Sir Stamford Raffles, had one that was brought up from a cub, in the nursery with his own children. It used to feed with the cat and dog, and was so gentle and amiable that it never needed a chain or any punishment. It didn't even mind being teased by the dog. This kind loves to sit up and beg, something like a dog, with paws outstretched, and sometimes its tongue, too. It must be quite an amusing pet."

"I wish we had a pet bear," said Ella. "Are they affectionate, Miss Matheson?"

"Affectionate? I should rather think they are!" put in Cyril. "Haven't you ever heard of a bear's hug?"

"Do they really hug people when they like them?" asked the little girl, innocently.

"Yes, when they like them for dinner," answered her brother. "That's their way of *killing*, baby! They just squeeze the life out of you with their great strong front paws, and crush all your bones."

"I never heard whether bears are affectionate to human beings in the way Ella means," said Miss Matheson. "But no animal is more devoted to its young ones or more courageous in defending them."



"Bear mothers are very fond — this one simply would not let her baby out of her sight, but always carried it with her, as gently as possible, when she went to the stream to drink."

"Just like a human being," said Cyril. "What I can't understand is how hunters and people who get to know so much about these creatures and how they feel, *can* go on shooting and killing them."

"But they *have* to," said Eric, "or else the bears would kill them. Don't you know any stories about fights with fierce bears, Miss Matheson?"

"I have read about them sometimes, but they are generally very horrible."

"I like horrible things," said Eric.

"Well, if a bear gets hold of a man's arm or leg in its mouth, it simply chews him to a pulp, without taking the trouble to kill him first. Is that gruesome enough for you? Or, fancy what can be done by a blow from the terrible claws at the ends of those gigantic paws! By the way, I remember reading of one man—he was an Indian, too—who saved himself from a bear by feigning death. He was a herdsman employed on a remote cattle-ranch, and slept at night in a little hut made of branches and open on all sides.

"One night he was awakened out of his sleep by a hot feeling on his face. It was the hot breath of some wild animal! He guessed at once that it must be a bear, a huge, terrible grizzly—one of those monsters for whom a cage, three times as strong as a lion's cage, is too fragile, and who will get out of one built for an elephant by digging underneath it!—and in the moment that this appalling conviction flashed into his mind, he

resolved not to move a finger, for he knew that if he made a sound or flinched ever so little, the bear would crack his skull like a nut-shell.

"Having smelt the man as much as he wanted to, and concluded that he would make a tasty supper, the bear scratched off the blankets in which he was covered, and seizing him by the leg, dragged him out into the open. The bear's teeth hurt terribly, but the Indian made not the slightest resistance, nor let a moan escape him."

"Nobody but an Indian could have done it." said Cyril, with admiration. "They *are* stunners at bearing anything with fortitude."

"It is the habit of bears to dig holes and bury their prey, if they do not devour it at once," continued Miss Matheson. "So presently he dropped the man, and began digging a grave for him. As Cyril says, anybody but a North American Indian could hardly have resisted the temptation then to try to escape, but that would have been fatal.

"The man lay perfectly still enduring his pain and terror in silence, and soon the bear dragged him to the hole he had dug, and having rolled him in, proceeded to cover him up with earth. The Indian did then move just a little to keep the earth over his face loose enough for him to breathe; and when the bear thought his supper safely hidden, he went away. Then at last the man freed himself, and managed to crawl to where his pony was tied. With great difficulty he mounted, and rode to the ranch house, where his wounds were attended to, and thus his life was saved."

"What an adventure!" and "How *could* he have borne it?" exclaimed the boys.

"Oh, tell us another about a baby-bear, please, Miss Matheson," said Ella. "I like that the best. Your brother in America tells you lots of funny animal stories, doesn't he?"

"Yes, Will is the source of most of my information," the lady confessed. "And that reminds me," she added, "I might find something to interest you in some of his letters. Did I ever tell you Will's story of the bear and the water-melons?"

"No, never!" cried the children in chorus.

"Well, there's a 'baby-bear' in that, so Ella will be pleased. You must know that my brother had a very fine patch of water-melons on his plantation, or 'water-millions' as he says the niggers will persist in calling them. Well, one summer the fruit was so abundant that he said any of his men might take what they wanted, if they would only let alone certain marked melons which he wanted for his own family. But after that he was very much annoyed to find that the marked melons were taken as often as the others, and the vines trampled and bruised into the bargain. He complained of this to his head gardener. But Peter only grinned and showed his white teeth.

"'No, Massa Will,' he said, 'none of us fellars go touch your marked water-millions. De nigger what steal dem, he got har all ober him! Him a bar, Massa Will. Bars mighty fond of water-millions.'

"So next morning my brother got up very

early, and taking his rifle, went down to the water-melon patch, and hid himself among some long grasses. Very soon, straight out from the melon patch, walking carefully on her hind legs, came a tall, black she-bear. She had a tiny woolly cub in one arm, and in the other she grasped one of the finest and largest of the melons!

"Will said she looked so absurdly like a black woman carrying a bundle and a baby, that he could no more shoot her than he could have fired at a negress. So Mrs. Bear got over the stile, and went safely off to the swamp to enjoy her breakfast and feed her little one unharmed. But it must have been a quaint sight.

"Now, if you will wait a minute," continued Miss Matheson, "I believe I know just where to put my hand on a letter of my brother's in which he tells of a very funny adventure he had with a bear on another occasion, while he was living in that same neighbourhood."

The youngsters were only too pleased. They had often heard extracts from Mr. Matheson's amusing correspondence with his sister, and had no doubt there was something good in store.

The governess soon returned. "Here it is," she said, "and this, I find, is the story of a brown bear, which is nearly twice as big as the black ones.

"My brother, you must know, is exceedingly clever in the use of the *lariat*, or *lasso*, as it is sometimes called. That is a rope with a noose in it, for catching wild horses and cattle. One day he and some companions had gone on a hunting expedition

some miles from the ranch, and this is what he says about what happened:

"'When we had gone some distance, I found I had been so stupid as to leave my rifle behind, and was armed with the lariat only, and a knife in a sheath in the belt round my waist; this was all the more annoying, as I presently found myself separated from my companions. Suddenly I espied a big brown bear, and gave chase to him.

"'Finding my swift pony gaining upon him, he came to a halt, and stood up on his hind legs and defied me. He was just within fair reach of my lariat, and, ponderous beast though he was, I could not resist the temptation of letting it fly at him. If I had missed my aim it would have been the first time for many a year—and probably the last, for Bruin looked dangerous. But the thong went uncoiling through the air, and the bear, an instant later, was safely inside the noose.

"'Then away went my pony, and the bear found himself following at a brisker pace, no doubt, than was altogether pleasant to him. The ground was level, and we seemed to be getting along finely, and I grinned to myself to think what a grand show we should by-and-by make riding into the ranch with our prize! There was a small tree a little ahead of us—the only one in sight,—and I was anxious to keep clear of it, as, if the bear got on one side of the tree and we the other, the result might not be comfortable. So I kept my eye on the tree to steer clear of it.

"'My pony was going at a good pace considering

the weight he had to pull, and yet we seemed to get no "forrader." It reminded me of the ship's captain in a gale of wind, who said that for two hours he was running a race with a lighthouse, and the lighthouse won!

"'Still the pony galloped—bookety—bookety—bookety!—but with no more progress than we used to make on our old rocking-horse in the play-room at home. I began to think we were bewitched. And then the tree gradually slipped further away. We were actually *going back!* I glanced behind to see what had happened to the bear, and the mystery was explained.

"'There sat Bruin on his haunches leaning back with all his might, and just hauling in my pony and me, hand over hand on the rope, like a sailor!

"'This was a turning of the tables, if you like. When the bear and we were about twenty feet apart, my pony smelt him for the first time. You know that for some reason the 'smell of a bear will send a horse nearly wild with terror. He turned his head and caught sight of Bruin out of the corner of his eye, and simply shrieked in panic. But his strength, even in mortal fear, was no match for that of the huge bear, and we were being slowly but surely dragged to a horrible death.

"'My only chance of escape was to jump off, and leave my little horse to his fate, but I couldn't do it. It would have been like deserting a comrade on the battle-field. How I longed for my rifle! but suddenly I remembered the knife. In an instant I

had drawn it from my belt, and with one stroke cut the rope, and my pony leaped forward like an arrow from a bow.

"'The next moment I heard two sharp shots, and, turning in the saddle, saw the bear give a spring into the air, turn a half-somersault, and come down with a thud. So I knew that my friends were not far off.

"'They had seen the whole performance, it afterwards transpired, from a distance of about forty feet, but were so mightily amused at the sight of old Bruin hauling us in, that they would not fire until the situation really became serious. They were just levelling their rifles when I cut the rope.

"'When measured, the monster was found to be nearly seven feet in length, and weighed nine hundred pounds.'"

"Thank you, Miss Matheson," said the boys, as their governess folded up the letter. "That's a *ripping* bear story. Did your brother have any more adventures like that?"

"I've never heard of any. He said in another letter that he had made up his mind never to catch a bear with a lariat again."

"I expect Mr. Bruin thought he would go home to Mrs. Bruin and say, 'Look what a fine horse with a man on it I've caught for dinner!'" said Eric.

"It seems almost as if the bear enjoyed the *fun* of the thing, too," said Cyril. "I wonder whether animals do know when anything is funny. What do you think, Miss Matheson?"

"I don't fancy they have a sense of humour as we have it," she replied; "but any one who has watched a kitten or a puppy at play cannot fail to see that they enjoy fun keenly in their own way. And that reminds me that I read once in the story of an American expedition to the Arctic regions to find Sir John Franklin, that the bears having devoured the explorers' stores of provisions, amused themselves by rolling the bread-barrels about the ice, as a cat does a reel of cotton, and, finding the india-rubber cloth too hard to chew, they had taken their revenge by tying it up in hard knots, just as if they knew how provoking such mischief would be. But the funniest part of all was that, when they had eaten or destroyed as much food as they could, they finished up their jollification by sliding down an ice-slope on their haunches!"

The children laughed heartily at this idea, and then Cyril said, "Miss Matheson, isn't the racoon sometimes called the little cousin of the bear?"

"You are quite right. The racoon is very like a miniature bear, but with the addition of a long tail. It is found principally in the southern parts of North America. It is the creature one so often reads of in 'nigger' stories, as a 'coon,' and hunting it used to be a favourite sport of plantation slaves. An uncle of mine, when I was a little girl, had a pet racoon, and I remember we all thought it a dear little thing."

"How large was it? Was it pretty?" asked Ella.

"This one—Coonie, as he was called—was about



"You can do ever so much more by kindness."

half as large again as a cat. His fur was grayish-brown, with a darker streak down the middle of his face to the tip of his nose. His fine tail was handsomely banded with rings of dark, black, and very light hair. He had a pointed nose like a fox, and large bright eyes."

"Was he kept loose, or chained up?"

"Sometimes he was chained up, to keep him from the chickens, but at other times he was set free to run about the garden and eat up the snails, worms, and beetles."

"Are they what it feeds upon?" asked Cyril.

"My uncle's racoon would eat almost anything," said Miss Matheson. "In the house we used to give him a share of anything that was going, but he was excessively fond of sweets. Coonie was a gentle, amusing little creature. I remember one funny trick he had, which, I believe, is common to creatures in a wild state, of taking his food in his two front paws, and dipping it in water before eating. It used to seem as though he were *washing* it, but I suppose it was in order to add the necessary amount of moisture."

"What used he to do to the chickens?" asked Eric.

"Ah, Coonie's behaviour to them was the one blemish in his character! It was really most deceitful. When on his chain, he would pretend to be ever so kind and friendly to them, and even let them come and share his food without hurting them. Thus he would win their confidence. Then, when he was free, he would steal among them,

taking advantage of the good opinion for benevolence which he had gained, and treacherously kill them and suck their blood!"

"That was *horrid!*" said Cyril.

"Very likely," said Ella, wisely, "when the chickens were little, their mothers told them not to make friends with the 'coon—because mothers always know, don't they?—and the chickens said, 'Oh, but he's so nice and kind; I'm sure he wouldn't hurt us! and he gives us such *lovely* pieces of his dinner!' Then, when the 'coon was loose, and came walking into the chickens' place all smiling, and the mothers said 'Run away, quick, and hide, or the 'coon will get you!' they did not run a bit, because they thought they knew much better than their mothers did. So they were all eaten up."

"What a nice little moral tale—'The 'Coon and the Chickens; or, Mothers know best,'" said Cyril, patting Ella on the head in a fatherly fashion. "Now, please, Miss Matheson, tell us another!"

But she shook her head laughingly.

"No, that's the end!" she said. "When I was a little girl the moral was always quite the last of the story. Ella's moral is too good to be improved, so I think we'll leave it for us all to reflect upon, and say 'finis.'"

ROUND THE HOME OF THE POLAR BEAR.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW HEARTH-RUG.

"HAVE you been in the drawing-room to-day?" asked Nellie Wyman, of her brother, one morning.

"No! Why? What's up!" he asked, hastily adding, "I've never been near"; for past experience caused him to fear some unpleasant discovery of cakes of mud on the carpet, or finger-marks on the paint.

"Go and see. There's something there you've never seen before."

Frank hesitated a moment, for being rather given to practical jokes himself, he was inclined to be suspicious of other people. However, Nellie's face was quite innocent, and full of surprise and pleasure that she wished to share; so he crossed the hall, opened the drawing-room door, and went in.

The first glance revealed a striking addition to the furnishing of the room. A large, yellowish-white skin lay in front of the fire-place. A head and nose, flattened out, was at one end, and four paws stretched at the sides.

"I say! That's something like!" said Frank, with admiration. "Is it a bear's-skin?"

"Yes, a polar bear's," replied Nellie, who was

close behind him. "Isn't it a beauty? Cousin Harry sent it as a Christmas present to mother."

"It's not a very white one, though, is it?" observed Frank. "It can't be dirty, can it?"

"Oh, no, of course not. That's the proper colour. They are never pure white—like a white rabbit, at least—only when they are very young. Don't you remember the old lady at the Zoo last time we were there, looking at the polar bear, and saying, how the poor thing must miss its sea-bathing in all the dirt of London, and how the keeper smiled and told her it was as clean as it could ever be, and all right?"

"Yes, of course! He said, didn't he? that they get darker and darker with age, until the sailors call them 'Brownie.' And another thing he told us, I remember, was that this kind of bear always has fur on his feet underneath, though the soles of the other bears' feet are bare. And I said, didn't I? 'Why is that?' and he laughed and said, 'You try walking on very slippery ice with your naked feet, and then put on a pair of thick woollen stockings, and see which is easiest to walk with.' I meant to try next time we had a sharp frost, but — I didn't. We ought to go to the Zoo again now, and have another look at old whitey. It'll be more interesting now we have this skin."

"Yes. But Cousin Harry himself is coming to-night, and he'll tell us a lot about it, and how they caught it."

"What, this very one?"

"Yes! It is the skin of a bear they killed on their last voyage to Greenland, so he knows all about it."

"That's jolly!" cried Frank. "I'll go and get some of my 'prep.' forward, so as to have time to hear it all when he comes."

Cousin Harry had just returned from a long voyage in a sealer. He had been frozen up and had experience of an Arctic winter, so the children were longing to hear some of his adventures.

Never before had they been known to settle so eagerly and industriously to their home-lessons after tea as they did that evening; never had they worked with such a will, and got through their tasks so quickly. When Cousin Harry's welcome knock was heard at the door, books were shut with a clap and pencil-boxes with a snap, and there was a general scamper to clear everything away that the room might look free and tidy, and ready for story-telling as soon as he came in.

"It's a cold night, isn't it, Cousin?" said Nellie. "Come and sit in the arm-chair by the fire."

"Cold? Do you call this *cold?*" asked Cousin Harry in apparent amazement, as he shook the snow-flakes off his hat before hanging it on the stand. "I should say it is almost sultry. There are no icicles on my moustache, are there? Well, it used to be frozen stiff all the while, this time last year. And I noticed I could take hold of your knocker just now without burning my hand."

"Without *burning* it—well, I should think so!" cried Frank. "You're chaffing us, coz! Our

knocker never gets hot enough to burn anybody even on the hottest summer day."

"But everything made of iron got *cold* enough to blister one's fingers every day where I was last year!" said Cousin Harry. "Aren't you far enough on in science, young man, to know that extreme heat and extreme cold produce precisely similar effects on the human skin?"

"No," answered Frank, "we're not up to that, yet. It does seem rum, doesn't it? But you're going to tell us about that big, white bear, whose skin you gave mother, aren't you, coz?"

"And about the midnight sun," said Nellie. "You did see the sun shining at midnight, didn't you?"

"And about the great icebergs," put in quiet Herbie, who had been left to finish clearing away the litter of lesson-books, while the other two flew to welcome their guest. "Have you been on an iceberg, Cousin Harry?"

"I am anxious to hear what the Esquimaux are like," said mother, settling herself, with her knitting-bag on her arm, to get along with the stocking that was always in progress. "I have heard that huntsmen in Arctic regions have to be very careful not to shoot these poor little people in mistake for seals or bears."

"Well, they are very much like animals in appearance, I must say" replied Cousin Harry. "And as they come crawling out of their snow-huts, covered from head to foot in furs, it is difficult to believe that they are human beings."

"Why do they *crawl* out?" asked Nellie. "Can't they walk?"

"Yes, but the door of their hut, which is just a hole in the thick snow-wall, is too small to get in or out at, standing upright. I managed to crawl into one, once, and—I was very soon thankful to crawl out again."

"Why? The smell?" asked mother.

"Rather! They burn fish-refuse on their fire, and fish oil in their lamp, and they and their clothes, and their beds, and everything, are saturated in stale fish grease and layers of dirt."

"Let's change the subject," said mother. "Poor things!"

"Tell about the bear," begged Frank.

"Ah, yes! He was a fine fellow. Measured six feet ten inches from nose to tail, and weighed six hundred pounds. His front teeth were seven inches long."

"How did you manage to kill him? Do tell us the whole story, right from the beginning," said Herbie. "From the very beginning of the beginning, please."

"Do you mean the beginning of my voyage?" asked Cousin Harry, looking not unwilling to spin a yarn.

And there was a ready chorus of "Yes! Yes! Please do!" so he settled himself and began:

"Well, my object in going on this voyage, as you know, was to obtain all sorts of information about the birds, beasts, and plants of the polar regions, and to collect specimens of them. We

started from London on the 17th of June, and in the course of a week or so, we had our first sight of the midnight sun."

"Does the sun really shine all night?" asked Herbie, "or is it only a sort of saying, about the 'midnight sun'?"

"It is actually and literally shining, the whole disc being above the horizon, but, of course, low, like our sunset glow, the whole night long. You know that the farther north you go, the longer become the days in summer-time. In the north of Scotland, the sun at midsummer has to get up so soon after he sets, that he finds it hardly worth while to go to bed, and a greenish light lingers over the spot where he has disappeared. Farther north still, he does not succeed in dipping out of sight at all, and has to shine on continuously for days, or even weeks, without getting a chance, as we put it, of 'sinking to rest.'"

"But he makes up for that by stopping in bed ever so long in the winter, doesn't he?" said Nellie.

"Yes, indeed! Then the land of the midnight sun becomes the land of the mid-day dusk, for the sun gets up only for about an hour, and, of course, you know that in polar regions the winter is one unbroken night of from three to six months in length."

"Was it like that when you were there, Cousin Harry?"

"Yes, I had the experience of one such winter."

"Wasn't it very awful?" asked Nellie, shuddering.

"The frozen silence of a polar winter is indeed terrible," replied the traveller. "But it is not quite without its pleasures. The sight of the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, is, in itself, a treat worth paying something for. And the moon, sometimes surrounded by a white halo with a pale red edge, and the sparkling stars, are beautiful indeed in their brilliance."

"Are the Northern Lights something like fire-works, Cousin Harry?" asked Frank.

"Well, perhaps. They are all the colours of the rainbow, but chiefly red, and are continually in motion, darting and sinking, throbbing, quivering, leaping and subsiding, in the form of a fiery arch, or outspread fan, across the horizon."

"I should like to see them," said Herbie. "But I should dread that long night. How glad the people must be to see the sun again."

"When he does rise, he gains power very quickly," said Cousin Harry. "The heat becomes intense; the snow melts away; and the ground is soon covered with luxuriant grasses and beautiful flowers. The birds that fled at the approach of the long winter, come back in thousands; insects and butterflies dance in the sunshine. The summer bursts upon the land all at once, as at the touch of a magician's wand. But it is over in about three months, and snow and desolation have it all their own again."

"We seem a long time in getting to that old bear,

Cousin Harry," observed Frank, trying not to yawn over a description of nature that made his more thoughtful brother's eyes shine.

"Ah, yes, the bear! Well, we had most of us left the ship, and gone for a walk on a large island of ice, of which there were hundreds floating all around us."

"Weren't you afraid of falling off?" asked Nellie.

"Well, one had to be careful, of course. The edges sloped like a beach, for a couple of yards or so, and then went sheer down like a precipice into hundreds of fathoms of black water. It was a misty night, and the moon did not give much light. All at once I noticed a huge object, a white monster like a shaggy elephant of immense size, stealthily, but surely, approaching us, and not more than thirty yards from where we stood. The awful monster, indeed, seemed to tower above us as high as an ordinary house."

"Cousin Harry!" gasped the children, with open eyes and mouths, as the narrator paused to enjoy their amazement; "that was not the bear! What *could* it have been?"

"At the same moment several of our dogs came rushing on the scene in the greatest excitement, and went bounding towards the monster, barking for all they were worth. And as each dog neared the mysterious giant, he, too, swelled out to enormous size! They danced wildly around the huge beast, which struck out at them with paws like the trunks of trees, until crack! bang! went

somebody's rifle and the mammoth fell—a mountain of fur and flesh, and we all ran to help pull it aboard the ship."

"But the size! Was it really a mammoth?" asked Frank.

"It was a fine animal, and a great prize, but the apparent size had been enormously exaggerated as we saw it in the distance, by what is known as *refraction*, caused by the mist and the peculiar light — a phenomenon very common in those regions."

"Oh-h-h! And what was done with the dead bear?"

"His skin, as you know, was cleaned and dressed, and brought home to you. His flesh made fairly good meat, which some of the crew seemed thoroughly to enjoy, and the amount of oil that was got out of his fat showed that he had been a great sealer in his day."

"Polar bears eat seals, then?"

"Yes, and fish too. But they like berries also, when they can get them. The bear is a strong swimmer, and has been known to be found swimming powerfully twenty miles from land, and with no ice-floes in sight. He is an expert diver, too, for all his slow and clumsy movements on land. He has been seen to make a dive after a salmon, and catch it. A certain Captain Lyon has described the bear as very artful in the way he hunts the seal. He will ride out to sea, or from one island to another, on a floating block of ice, which serves him as a raft, and when he sees a seal that looks

plump and tempting lying on another lump of ice, Mr. Bear plans a succession of dives, the last of which brings him out of the water suddenly, just at the spot where his astonished victim is lying. If the seal tries to escape by rolling into the water, the bear's claws are ready to catch him; if he remains on the ice, the enemy makes a powerful spring and destroys him there."

"I don't like bears," observed Nellie, sadly. "Seals are dear, gentle, soft things, with beautiful brown eyes, aren't they?"

"They are more lovable creatures than polar bears, certainly, but old 'Ursus' isn't wholly without his, or rather, I should say, *her* good points, for the female is a most affectionate and devoted mother. She will fight for her little cubs, and protect them to the last drop of her blood; she will allow herself to be overtaken by hunters or dogs, rather than escape by deserting her babies.

"One of the sailors on board our ship told me what he declared to be a true story about this. He said he was once with an exploring party in the polar seas, when the crew made a fire on the ice and cooked themselves a savoury dinner of stewed walrus. The smell attracted a white bear and her two cubs. Hoping to get them near enough to shoot, the sailors threw out pieces of offal from the ship, and the bear ventured near enough to take them away. She was seen, though very thin and starved-looking, to eat but a small piece herself, and give the rest to her cubs. One would have thought that the sight of such touching devotion

would have aroused some sense of sympathy and chivalry in the sailors' hearts. But, no! Big game was all they cared for. So they fired, killing the cubs, and then wounded the mother.

"Though sadly lamed, the poor creature still crawled to the spot where the dead little ones lay, trying to make them eat the last piece of meat she had brought, evidently unable to understand why they lay so still. Again and again, fear drove her from the spot, yet every time mother-love drew her back, moaning with grief and pain, till, at last, one well-directed shot put an end to her sufferings, and the poor fond creature died licking her little ones' wounds."

"I suppose they are very fierce to human beings, though, aren't they?" said Frank, rubbing his eyes.

"A bear will rarely attack a man unless very hungry or made furious by being chased; on the contrary, he is disposed to be timid, and to escape by flight. An unusually severe winter, though, will drive even the polar bear to desperation. I remember reading of an instance in which several huge bears took up their quarters on the roof of a settler's house, and sat upon the chimneys for the sake of the warmth until the brickwork gave way, and the flues became so choked that the fires beneath would no longer burn.

"The people inside were so nearly stifled by the smoke, that they were forced to face and drive away the bears rather than endure death by suffocation. These creatures were, of course, so ravenous that

they would have killed and devoured anything; but I have also been told—I don't know if it is true—that, not unfrequently, when a Greenlander and his wife are paddling out at sea, if they come too near one of the floating ice-floes, a white bear will jump from it into the boat, with the intention of being carried to land, and will not hurt them."

"That upsets the whole thing into the sea, I suppose!" said mother, who generally left all the questioning and interrupting to the young folks.

"So one would think. But it does not always, it seems, for the story goes that the bear will sit quietly and inoffensively in the place where he first came down, and allow himself to be rowed ashore. I should think the man is glad enough to get rid of his passenger without stopping to ask for his fare."

"Now tell us about the seals, Cousin Harry, please!" said Nellie. "Of course, you saw a lot of them."

"Thousands! But—," and here Cousin Harry pulled out his watch—"it's too late this evening, I think, to begin about them. We shall have to adjourn the meeting until another time."

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING ABOUT SEALS.

It was nearly a week before Cousin Harry was able to spare another hour to talk to the children of his adventures in the land of the polar bear. In the meantime, however, Herbert and Nellie had

prepared themselves for a more intelligent enjoyment of what he had promised to tell them about seals, by paying a visit to those that are kept at the Zoological Gardens.

The seal tank is always one of the favourite sights of the gardens. Everybody is interested in the strange bottle-shaped creatures, with their dog-like heads, beautiful brown eyes, and queer flippers. At the time Nellie and Herbert were there a particularly clever seal went daily through a performance for the amusement of the public. Besides diving for fish, he would come out of the water and climb a sloping plank that led up to a wooden chair. Then he would settle himself on his hind flippers on the seat of the chair and catch further dainties that were thrown to him. Finally, at the word of command, he would "kiss" his keeper, and slide off into the water again with a great splash.

"I read once," said Herbie, as they came home, "of a man, who, when he was a little boy, used to think that that gentleman at court—it was in the days of Queen Victoria—who was called 'Keeper of the Queen's Seal,' was a person who had charge of a tame seal that was the queen's pet! and he used to imagine the wet, black, shiny creature going flip-floppeting up the steps of the throne for her to pat him! Wasn't that a funny mistake? I never see the seals at the Zoo without remembering it."

Nellie was for inviting her friend Rose Davis to join the party when at length a post-card was received fixing a time for Cousin Harry's visit, "because she had a sealskin jacket."

"I wouldn't, if I were you!" said mother. "She will never like her jacket again, if Cousin Harry has much to say about the barbarous way in which the poor harmless creatures are butchered for the sake of their fur. He would have brought me a cloak this voyage, but I wouldn't have it."

"But Rose's is only imitation!" said Nellie. "It looks just as nice, but it's really silk plush."

"Oh, then, you may safely ask her in," said mother, laughing, "for her conscience will not suffer."

So there were two girls as well as two boys grouped round the voyager when he was once again settled in the armchair by the dining-room fire.

"No," he said, in reply to an appeal from Nellie, "I'm not going to harrow up your feelings with anything horrible. I have heard that the slaughter of seals for the trade is often carried on with great cruelty, but I kept out of the way when the killing was going on, so I saw nothing of it. One man who went on the ice to help came back to the ship looking very sick and queer.

"'I can't stand it!' he said to me. 'I shall have to throw up the job. They look at you like my old dog, Carlo, and cry just like babies. I'd as soon go into the school-house at home and knock a score of the kiddies on the head, as club those poor things to death!' He was a good sort of fellow, and he and I chummed up a bit after that. . . . Yes," continued Cousin Harry, after a



B.O.W.

"Swimming powerfully twenty miles from land"

slight pause, "the seals were there by hundreds and thousands, lying all about on the ice-jam!"

"On the *what*, cousin?" asked Nellie, looking surprised.

"Ah!" laughed Cousin Harry. "There's a nice juicy lollipop of a word for you! I dare say you'd all like me to bring some specimens of 'ice-jam' out of my pocket and hand them round for you to sample!"

But Master Frank fancied himself a little too old for that kind of joke. "It is when the wind and the currents force all the loose pieces of ice together into a mass, and close up all the water holes between, isn't it?" he said, with an air of superior information.

"Something like that!" agreed Cousin Harry. "Well, there they were, big ones and little ones, basking or playing together. In the water, seals are very lively and frolicsome, and seem to run races, and chase one another in the surf, where they roll and tumble like so many dolphins. The voices of a great herd of seals can be heard miles away, as a dull, vibrating roar, and it has frequently warned vessels off a dangerous coast in foggy weather. By the way, although not a singer himself, the seal has a decided taste for music."

"Really and truly?"

"Yes, that's quite correct. Their sense of hearing is most acute. One traveller, in an account of a voyage to Spitzbergen, tells us that, when the violin was being played on board, quite a crowd of seals would follow the ship all the time. Sir Walter

Scott, in one of his poems, you know, says that—

'Rude Heiskar's seals, through surges dark,
Will long pursue the minstrel's bark.'

"And speaking of Sir Walter Scott reminds me that in 'The Antiquary' there is an amusing story of a fight between a young man and a 'phoca,' as the creatures used to be called in Scotland, our learned friends north of the Tweed preferring to give the seal his Latin name."

"Seals live in Scotland, then, as well as in the Arctic seas!" said Frank.

"Oh, yes. It is common off the coast of Colonsay, and is, or used to be, largely hunted in the estuary of the Tees, where it made great havoc among the salmon. But I've no doubt, like most other wild creatures that afford sport in these islands, the seal will soon become scarce and die out. The special fur seal, the skin of which is such a prize in most European markets, is another kind, that beneath an outer covering of coarse hair has the exquisitely fine and soft 'underwear' which we covet for our own use."

"What about the young man and the 'phoca,' Cousin Harry?" asked Herbert.

"Oh, haven't you read the story? Young Hector M'Intyre, seeing a seal lying asleep on the beach, must needs seize a stick and 'go for' the unoffending beast. He struck it a heavy blow, but without inflicting any injury. The assaulted seal, however, 'knitted her brows,' as, we are told, is the custom of the animal when angry, and seizing the stick in her

fore-paws, to the great astonishment of Hector, knocked him over with it, and scuttled into the sea, carrying the stick with her as a trophy of her victory in the combat."

"Hector got more than he bargained for, didn't he?" said Frank. "He had much better have caught the seal and tamed it. That's what I should have done."

"Do the Greenlanders often make pets of the seals?" asked Nellie.

"No, indeed!" said Cousin Harry. "They look upon them solely from a business point of view, which, considering how poor the inhabitants of Greenland are, and that nearly every part of the seal is useful, or can be sold, is perhaps hardly to be wondered at. The flesh makes excellent meat, the oil, of which quantities can be obtained from the fat, gives them both light and fuel, and may also be bartered for nearly everything else that they want. They, in addition, use much of this oil to soften their dried and hardened fish food with.

"The fibres of the seal's sinews make strong thread for sewing; from various parts of the inside skins tent-curtains and shirts are made, while the stomach itself is turned into an oil-flask. As for the outer skin, it is the only covering for both tents and boats, and, cut into strips, it makes all the thongs and straps which are required for binding. The seal may be called, indeed, the 'universal provider' of Greenland."

"Like the reindeer is in Lapland," said Herbie.

"Is that performing seal in the Zoo the only one

that has ever been tamed, do you think?" asked Nellie.

"Oh, no! There are many stories about tame seals. The creature is considered by some writers on natural history to be equal in intelligence and affectionateness to the dog itself, and its faithfulness has repeatedly been proved to be very great. It has been known to live on the most friendly and playful terms with puppies, and one that was kept alive on a whaler became so much attached to the ship and the crew, that, when thrown overboard for a swim, it would come back when tired of liberty and show in the plainest manner its desire to be again taken on board."

"Do you know," said the children's mother, who, with her knitting as usual in her hand, had just joined the group, "your mentioning that reminds me of a story of a seal that I heard many years ago, when I was staying at a little seaside village in Scotland. It made a great impression on me at the time, and your words have brought it very clearly back.

"A young woman, who acted as servant at the house where I was staying, told me that when she was a girl at home she knew of some children who had a young seal given to them by a sailor, for a pet, and that they were fond of it.

"The father, however, was a small farmer, and it happened that the next season after the coming of the seal was a very bad one for his crops. Then an old woman in the village told him that it was dreadfully unlucky to keep a seal, and that he need not expect

anything to go well with him so long as that creature was about the place.

"The man, like many ignorant people, was inclined to be superstitious. Anyhow, he did not want to risk another bad harvest if it might be avoided, so he got a boatman to take the seal out a long way from land, and throw it into the sea.

"That same evening, however, as the children, feeling very sad at their loss, were sitting on the shore, they noticed a black, shiny knob on the surface of the waves, that seemed to be coming nearer. Soon they could see the bright brown eyes of their dear seal swimming straight for land. In a few minutes it emerged from the surf and came flapping up the beach to them as fast as ever it could.

"After this, they were allowed to keep it for several months. But, unfortunately, the farmer had another season of what he called ill-luck, and again the superstitious old woman in the village croaked that it was 'all along o' that seal.' So this time he put the creature in charge of some sailors going to the Baltic, impressing on them to set it at liberty in the sea only when they reached their destination.

"This they did. But the faithful seal was not to be daunted. Back it came after a longer interval, to be welcomed with delight by its little friends. The children then begged their father never to send their pet away again, and he half-promised that he would not. But still things went wrong with him, and he was more than ever disposed to

think there must he something in what the old woman said.

"He did not quite like to kill the creature, yet he wished in some way to get rid of it so that it could never make its way back any more. So, unknown to the children, he put out the poor thing's eyes, and placed it on board a ship, bound this time for Norway.

"Some days after the ship had sailed, a terrible storm arose, and the farmer and his family shut their doors and windows as close as they could to keep out the blasts of wind and rain. But soon after they went to bed, the farmer heard, in the lulls of the storm, a plaintive moaning at the house-door. It sounded almost like the crying of a child, so he went down and opened the door to see what was there.

"To his amazement, on the very threshold, lay the poor blind seal, exhausted and dying.

"Greatly touched, the farmer carried it in to the kitchen fire, and did all he could to restore it to life. But in vain. In the morning he was obliged to tell his broken-hearted girl and boy how their dear faithful pet had a third time crossed the seas, in all the wild weather, to return to them, and died in the attempt."

Nellie was wiping her eyes when her mother finished, and it was several minutes before either of the boys spoke. Then Frank remarked—

"I saw a picture of what looked like a sort of seal the other day, Cousin Harry, but it had a pair of the nastiest looking tusks you ever beheld,

like elephants' tusks, only curved the opposite way."

"Ah, that was a walrus, or morse, as it is sometimes called, and those ugly tusks are the finest ivory in the world. They are one of the walrus's main points of difference from the seal, and with them he is able to climb the sides of steep and slippery icebergs, and also to resist the attacks of the polar bear, who does not find him half such an easy prey as the undefended seal.

"But he uses them to get his living with as well, for they are fine forks for tearing up the long tangled growths of sea-weed which form part of the walrus's food. The walrus quite appreciates the advantages of being well-armed, for he is a great fighter among the males of his own kind, and terrible battles sometimes take place. On the other hand, I have been told that, when undisturbed, they may be seen caressing one another with great tenderness; their snouts meeting as if they were actually kissing."

"Ugh!" said Nellie, making a grimace, "fancy a walrus's *kiss*—with that awful face and those tusks!"

"I don't suppose he looks so ugly to Mrs. Walrus as he does to you, Nellie," said Cousin Harry. "She, no doubt, thinks him a handsome fellow. And they are among the most affectionate parents in the world. A mother walrus will place herself between her little ones and the hunters, and receive on her own body the blows aimed at them. When the young are killed or wounded, the old ones will

often come to the surface of the water and carry the bodies down before they can be got into the boats. After this, with cries of distress, when they have gone some distance from the scene of attack, they will raise the dead to the air again, as if trying to bring them to life. The walrus certainly hasn't a sweet face, but it has its feelings, poor brute, like the rest of us."

"Their shapes are not so nice as the seals', any more than their faces," said Frank. "That one in the picture I was speaking of looked as if he was rolled up in a feather bed."

"Well, so he was, after a fashion. The length of the walrus is often some fifteen or sixteen feet, with a breadth in proportion; with this, his head looks ridiculously small. But a great deal of this bulk is made up of the layer of blubber—a kind of fat—with which, to the thickness of six inches or more, he is wadded under his skin. This padding is a great protection, moreover, against the tusks of his own kind, and enables him to fight furiously with comparatively little injury."

"Cousin Harry!" said Herbie, as the guest, all too soon as it seemed, was seen with his fingers upon his watch, "you spoke of the icebergs just now. Did you really see any?"

"Scores, my dear boy! I might say, hundreds" replied Cousin Harry.

"And are they very wonderful?"

"Wonderful, and beautiful, and terrible! It is simply impossible to give you any idea of their extraordinary effect. When a number of icebergs

are seen crowded together, they look like a crystal city. Towers, domes, embattled castles, delicate and soaring cathedral spires, are all there, sparkling like diamonds in the sunshine, tinted beryl green or heavenly blue in the shade. Jules Verne, I remember, in one of his thrilling stories, describes an ice-wall, rising from the huge ice island on which a party of adventurers found themselves, as glistening with every hue of the rainbow. He compares the half-transparent, half-opaque mass of ice to jasper-stone, with its streaks and dashes and ribbons of many colours — 'strewn with enamelled arabesques, sparkling crystals, and delicate ice-flowers.'"

"Oh, how lovely—how lovely they must be!" cried Nellie.

"'Like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal,'" quoted their mother.

"Yes," said Cousin Harry. "I could not help thinking of St. John's description of the Holy City. It was indeed a dazzling and magnificent sight. And yet it made one tremble."

"Are they very dangerous to ships, then?" asked Frank.

"Well, just think! If a stationary rock is dangerous, imagine what a moving one must be. Then, at night, fancy running into a floating monster a hundred feet high, for icebergs can't be persuaded to carry lights."

"A hundred feet! Why, that's as high as our church!" said Frank. "Are they often as big as that?"

"Generally much bigger!" said Cousin Harry. "Why, I've heard that in the neighbourhood of Cape Horn, they are sometimes seven or eight hundred feet high. And that's only the little bit that is seen. By far the greater part of the iceberg is out of sight."

"Yes," said Herbert, "one might know that by the way bits of ice float in a glass of iced lemonade. There's more than twice as much under water as is seen above the surface."

"About *eight* times as much," corrected Cousin Harry. "Some of the largest icebergs must go down nearly a mile into the sea. And then a great peril connected with these frozen mountains is that they are always melting, and rolling over, and splitting up. You know how, in a thaw, masses of frozen snow keep sliding off the roofs of the houses and coming down with a thud into the gardens. Well, the icebergs, which are themselves only broken pieces of Arctic glaciers, are changing and melting under the sun's rays all the while. And every time there is a split, imagine the awful crash. We were threading our way in and out among icebergs like, as some one had said, a 'crystal Venice with its glassy canals,' for nearly two days; but I confess, beautiful as they were, I was glad enough to get away from them."

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF THE POLAR BEAR'S NEIGHBOURS.

"COUSIN HARRY," said Frank, as soon as he could find an opening, on the occasion of the Arctic traveller's next visit to the home of his young cousins—"were Polar bears and seals absolutely the only animals you saw all the time you were away?"

"Dear me, no!" he replied, evidently surprised at the question. "There were reindeer, and wolves, and foxes, beavers, musk-rats, polar hares, wolverines, and other creatures that were killed on every opportunity for the sake of their fur, as well as our friends, the Esquimaux dogs, that drew our sledges so many miles over the ice."

"Oh, tell us about the beavers — they're so clever!" and, "What about the dogs?" said Nellie and Frank in a breath.

"Ladies first," said Cousin Harry. "Let me think what I can remember about the beaver."

"Oh, no, tell about the dogs, please!" said Nellie, "because they're sure to be nice, and Frank has to go away presently and do his algebra."

"'Nice,' are they? Well, they're dear, useful old things, and I don't know what we should do in the ice-fields without them, but I don't know that I should exactly call them 'nice.' They're not quite drawing-room pets like your Prinnie, you know, Nell."

"Prinnie is a darling," said his mistress warmly.

"Oh, I must tell you something he did to-day, Cousin Harry. He is so *knowing*. He was lying on his mat under the table, and I didn't even know he was there, and I just happened to say to mother that he had been a very naughty dog this morning, and upset my bedroom water-jug trying to drink out of it (although he always has a pan of fresh water downstairs), and what a dreadful mess it made, and how cross I was, when Prinnie, who must have been listening, crept out from under the table with his ears laid back and his tail hanging limp, and stole out at the door with the most dejected and ashamed look you ever beheld. Mother said she was sure he had heard me talking about him and saying that he had been naughty."

"Of course he had! That reminds me of a story of Sir Walter Scott, who was very fond of animals. One day he was talking to a friend, and, pointing to two beautiful dogs lying on the hearth-rug, he said, 'Those creatures understand every word I say.' His friend didn't seem to believe it. 'Well, now, you listen to me,' said Sir Walter, 'and notice what happens.'

"He took up a book, and pretended to be reading aloud. 'I have two lazy, good-for-nothing dogs, who lie by the fire and sleep, and let the cattle ruin my garden.'

"Up jumped the dogs, and rushed out at the door, in great excitement. But finding no cattle in the garden, they came back and lay down on the rug again. A second time Sir Walter repeated the same words, and out ran the dogs as before.

The third time, however, they were not to be caught; but, instead of going into the garden, they came to their master, wagging their tails and whimpering, as much as to say, 'What do you mean, dear master? There are no cows there, and we don't know what it is you want us to do!'"

"The dear, clever creatures! Just think of it!" said Nellie. "But, cousin, aren't Esquimaux dogs good and intelligent like others?"

"Good and intelligent they certainly are, and without them the Esquimaux would not be able to travel, or even to live; but they are not, certainly, like the dogs we are accustomed to in England. They are half wild creatures, being fed by their owners only in the winter, while during the summer months, when the thermometer rises to a degree or two above freezing point, and the dogs hang out their tongues and lie about in shady corners, they are turned loose to forage for themselves.

"They can't stand much heat, then," said Frank.

"No; they are specially adapted by nature for living in the intensely cold region which is their home. For one thing, they are all provided with overcoats. This outer garment is straight and coarse, and in winter grows to a length of three or four inches, while their underwear is of fine, close soft wool, which begins to grow in the early part of the winter, and falls off in the spring."

"That's like the seal, then," said Herbert, "you said he had two coats."

"Yes, and the beaver likewise. This double

covering is given to most of the animals that inhabit cold countries. The thickness of the fur of the Esquimaux dog is immense, and serves also as armour in the frequent furious fights which are his chief amusement. His thick, bushy tail is also of great service to him, as, when he sleeps upon the ice, he can tuck his feet under him, and curl his tail like a grand fur boa about his nose, and so generally escape being frozen."

"Fancy sleeping on the ice," said Nellie. "Poor things!"

"They are so hardy, they don't mind it," said Cousin Harry. "Their bodies are so warm that sometimes in the night a hole an inch deep will have been thawed out of the ice where they have been lying. They are also very strong. They will often travel as much as fifty miles a day at the rate of seven or eight miles an hour, drawing a weight of one hundred and twenty pounds. But if the journey happens to be through soft snow, they can't get on faster than about two miles an hour, which is very tedious for the unlucky travellers."

"If they have to look out for themselves in the summer," said Frank, "I wonder they don't cut away altogether and do no more work."

"They have the sense to know that there is no chance of food anywhere in the winter, except what is given them by man, and they are wise enough to prefer work to starvation, though I am sorry to say, they are so poorly fed in return for their services, that one would think they must be nearly starved; yet I suppose if they

were, they could not possess so much strength and endurance. But they are always ravenously hungry, and will seize and gulp down almost any object they can find lying about. I have heard of them trying to eat a feather-bed."

"Do they like drawing the sledges?"

"They're not keen on it. Some are good, steady fellows, but most of them will do anything they know to escape their share of the work. They will bite through the traces, get under the sledge, or jump over one another's backs to get into the middle of the team out of the way of the whip, and play up all sorts of tricks."

"Oh, do you have to beat them?" asked Nellie, with evident disapproval.

"It seems impossible to drive them without, I regret to say," Cousin Harry confessed. "But the whip is as much trouble to the driver as it is to the dogs, if that's any consolation to you, Nellie. The lash is six yards long, on a handle less than half a yard. Fancy trying to wield a thing like that so dexterously as to be able to touch any dog of a team of six or eight, just where you please; the long lash gets entangled, or caught in the harness, or perhaps twisted round your own neck. I tried to use it once, and the very first go off it got hitched round a lump of ice on the road and before I knew where I was, I found myself snatched out of the sledge and tumbled heels over head in the snow.

"But far worse for lazy dogs than the terrors of the whip is the punishment they receive from the hard

working members of their own team. If a dog contrives, as he sometimes will, to slip out of his harness and escape, it is difficult to restrain the rest from chasing him. They will, however, 'nurse their wrath and keep it warm' for hours, and if he by and by ventures to steal back to his quarters they will probably set upon him so furiously that unless he is rescued they will tear him to pieces."

"Do their masters never get fond of them?" asked Herbert.

"I don't think the Esquimaux have much idea of making companions of their animals, though they prize them for their usefulness. But travellers of other nationalities become very much interested in the creatures.

"In the story of Nansen's attempt to reach the North Pole in the *Fram* we read that, during the long weeks of their imprisonment in the ice, the dogs were a constant source of amusement to the whole company. They are great at chumming up among themselves. Three or four of them will form themselves into a gang, somewhat after the fashion of London street boys, eating, sleeping, and fighting together, until one or other chances to give offence to his comrades, when he is driven away and not allowed to return to their society until they choose to relent. But," concluded Cousin Harry, "I'm afraid I have lectured too long about these Arctic dogs: oughtn't you to be seeing after those nice, interesting problems in algebra, Frank?"

"Not just this minute," said Frank. "If I



"Big ones and little ones, basking.

begin at half-past, it will do. I say, though, isn't it rather fun to drive a team of dogs?"

"It's not at all dull work. When the ice is rough and lumpy, you get jerked and bumped about merrily. Fancy having eight or ten frisky dogs, some of them not much more than puppies, harnessed tandem-fashion, or in pairs, to a sledge, and having to guide them over, or round, or even through all kinds of obstacles.

"They don't jog along quietly, like ponies, but are so occupied fighting and larking among themselves that the traces often get terribly tangled up, and the driver has to get off the sledge to extricate them. He must also be prepared to get out whenever they come to a ridge of snow, for the dogs, unlike the good steady horse, generally hate their work, and are glad of any excuse to pretend they can't drag the sledge any farther. So then the driver has to alight and, with the help of his companions, push or pull the vehicle out of the difficulties himself.

"But sometimes you meet with a well-trained and conscientious dog, who needs no whip, but obeys the voice of the driver, and he will be placed at the head of the team to lead them. It's rather upsetting, in more senses than one, when a team of these dogs, in the course of a journey, comes across the scent of a bear or wild bird, for away they go after it, helter-skelter, like your Prinnie at the sparrows in the road, bouncing over hummocks of ice, or splashing through holes full of water, with a complete disregard of the

thing they are dragging at their heels. Sometimes, however, the driver will make use of this passion for hunting to put renewed spirit into his team when they are tired, the cry of 'a seal! a seal!' or 'a bear!' having much the same effect on them, even if there is no such animal in sight, as the word 'cats!' has on dogs at home.

Now, Frank, I'm going to talk about something else — last night's discussion in the House of Commons, probably! — for as long as I yarn on about the animals there'll be no algebra done, and that will mean loss of marks to-morrow, and thousands of lines to write on your half-holiday, and all sorts of horrors."

"Yes, I s'pose I must go now," said Frank regretfully. "Herb's lucky, he got all his prep. done in the dinner-hour. You'll have to take in all Cousin Harry's talk for me and yourself too, now, old man, for I shall expect you to tell me every word afterwards."

"I'll help him," said Nellie. "Wait a second, Cousin Harry; I'll get a pencil and take notes. You're going to tell us all about beavers now, aren't you. Do they live in the same countries as the seals and polar bears?"

"We did not see many this last voyage. It was when I was in North America a few years ago that I made the acquaintance of the beaver family, and I must say they are among the most interesting little people I ever met."

"I'm going to be very correct," said Nellie, settling herself afresh with pencil and paper. "I

mean to show Frank I can make as good a report of a lecture as he can. Did you say they live in North America, Cousin Harry? Nowhere else?"

"I believe a few still survive in Europe, on the banks of the Rhone, for instance, but the last stronghold of the beaver is in the extreme North of America."

"Now, about the little houses they make — I know they build houses," said Nellie, wetting her pencil with a business-like air. "Just how big are they, and what shape, and how many rooms do they have, and——"

"And what colour are their carpets and curtains, eh?" suggested Herbert. "And is their drawing-room furniture rosewood or mahogany?"

"We had better get a clear idea of the animal itself first," said Cousin Harry, "and talk about its house afterwards."

"Oh, I know it's a darling little thing with short brown fur as soft as silk!" said Nellie.

"Yes, but you forget that the beaver is one of those creatures which wear a top-coat," said Cousin Harry. "That is not soft and silky, but made of long, and rather coarse hair. The beaver is generally, in size, about two feet long and one foot high, and its most remarkable features, so to speak, are its teeth and its tail. The teeth are long and powerful, and chisel-shaped at the edges. With these, it will file a deep groove all round a large-sized tree, deepening the cut until the trunk is completely sawn through and the tree falls. It can also peel an apple as neatly as you

would with a fruit-knife, by sitting on its hind feet, and holding the apple in its front paws, and turning it round and round against those same sharp teeth until it is all peeled."

"The darling!" exclaimed Nellie. "How sweet of it! And they've funny, flat tails like trowels, haven't they?"

"Yes, like trowels or butter-pats, flat, oval in shape, and covered with hard scales instead of hairs. They begin building by sawing down a big tree that grows conveniently near the stream they wish to make their home, arranging that it shall fall across the water.

"With this trunk, from which they cut all projecting branches, as a foundation, they, with boughs and mud, build a dam, or bank, across the stream. They then erect their houses, or 'lodges' as they are called, which are about three feet high, and six or seven feet across, dome-shaped, and with two entrances, one for 'passengers,' the other for 'goods.'"

"Oh, cousin! Really and truly?" questioned Herbert.

"Yes; they have a straight entrance to the chamber where they store the wood which they need for their winter food, and a zig-zag one by which they go in and out themselves. These houses are very clean and neat inside, plastered smoothly with a kind of mortar made of clay and dry grass, which they carry very cleverly in their fore-paws, pressing the burden against their chest, while they are swimming from place to place.

"Beavers have a great idea of filling up chinks, and making a home secure from wet and cold. I have heard of one, who was kept tame in a hunter's cabin, tearing up his master's clothes in the night to stuff up holes in the rude log walls through which there came a draught.

"A beaver that was kept at one time in a zoological collection in Paris, feeling cold one night in the winter when a snowstorm came on, not only cut up the twigs of trees which had been given him for food, and wove them basket-fashion in and out of the bars of his cage, but chopped the apples which he also had to eat, into pieces of handy size to fill up the chinks. And, as even then the walls were not satisfactory, he crammed the snow itself which had blown in, into the cracks and crannies, and, by the morning, had contrived quite a cosy and storm-proof shelter."

"They ought to have given him a nice, new, *proper* house after that, as a reward for his industry," said Herbert.

"I expect he would like best the one he had made himself, though!" said Cousin Harry. "I remember reading once of a pet beaver who was constantly trying to build himself a little house in a corner of the room where he was kept, using for the purpose any broom or brush he could find about, to do duty as a log of wood, and carrying off books from his master's writing-table and various cloths and dusters from the housemaid's pantry, to build the walls and fill up those chinks and cracks which seem to be a beaver's special detestation."

"How I should have loved to see him do it; wouldn't you?" said Nellie. "I hope his master let him live in his little play-house, and make believe, when it was done."

"Suppose the master particularly wanted one of the books, though" suggested Cousin Harry. "I am rather afraid that the servants, when their stolen brooms and dusters were wanted, came and pulled Mr. Beaver's clever work to pieces. But that would not discourage him. Beavers are most persevering creatures; so I suppose the little fellow would just begin again."

"Suppose there aren't any trees just close by where they live—suppose they have cut them all down, or eaten them all up," said Herbert, "what then? Do they desert that place and go to find another?"

"Not at all! They go farther inland, and *fetch* the trees."

"Fetch them, cousin? How can they? Such little creatures as they are?"

"That's another of Mr. Beaver's clever dodges," said Cousin Harry. "When they have fixed upon the tree that they think will suit them—for we really must allow that these wonderful creatures do think, to a certain extent—they begin cutting a channel from the edge of the beaver-pond to the foot of the tree. This is generally about a yard wide and the same deep. Into this canal the water, of course, flows at once. Then they cut down their tree in such a position as easily to fall lengthways into the canal. Thus they float it down to the pond

where it is wanted. When they need to go further inland, they lengthen their canal to the next tree, and so on."

"Oh, cousin, it seems almost too wonderful to believe," said Nellie. "I hardly need to make notes of that. It is so interesting and so easy to remember. And did you say they eat *wood?* There can't be much goodness in that, surely."

"Oh, but that is while it is green and full of sap. Still, they do eat fruits, and nuts, and things in the summer, when they can get them. It is a pretty sight to see a family of baby-beavers playing about a log in the water, pushing one another off, and frolicking like kittens. I have read of one hunter, who went to shoot them, thinking their gambols and caresses of one another so much like his own children at home, that he lowered his gun and went away, for he hadn't the heart to hurt them."

"I'm glad of that. He was a nice man," said Nellie.

"It is in the winter, when they can get no fresh twigs and leaves, that the beavers eat the wood that they have stored up. And they always take first those logs from the lower part of the pile, which have been steeped in the water, so that they are not dry. The winters in their part of the world are very severe, and the ponds and streams will be covered with thick ice, but the beaver has a doorway to the open air in his upstairs rooms as well as in his basement, so he is all right. The frost freezes the mud walls of the

beaver-lodge so hard that even the wolverine, which, next to man, is the beaver's greatest enemy, cannot break through."

"Is a wolverine a young wolf?" asked Herbert.

"Oh, dear no! It is a small animal more allied to the bear family. It is sometimes called the glutton."

"Oh, the glutton!" said Herbert, in disgust. "I've heard of that. A horrid beast. Jumps on a reindeer's back and sticks like a burr, and sucks the poor thing's blood till it drops."

"That's the fellow. Troubled with chronic hunger, it seems. Even in captivity it can eat twelve or fourteen pounds of flesh in a day, and still be hungry. That must really be very bad, you know. Perhaps we ought to sympathise with such an affliction, and even forgive the poor glutton for robbing hunters' traps, and digging up graves."

"Oh, don't, please!" begged Nellie, covering her ears. "We'll always call it the *glutton* because it deserves it. Wolverine is rather a nice name, —too good for such a horrid creature."

"If I were to bring you a necklet made of its fur, you would call it by the prettiest name possible, Nellie," said Cousin Harry; "for that is most beautiful. It is long, soft, and of a rich, chestnut-brown colour, and the gloss upon it is finer than that of any other fur I know. But an occasional skin is not enough payment for all the mischief the glutton does to the sable hunters, in stealing the baits out of their traps, or, far worse, devouring the hidden supplies of food on which the men depend for their lives."

"Does the sable live in that same cold part of the world, Cousin Harry? No—please don't point to the clock. You know it may be ever so long before you come again. Do tell us about the sable."

"Most creatures that have thick rich fur live in very cold countries, as you may suppose, if you come to consider it, for that is the provision made for them against the severe frost. I forgot to tell you that another of the wolverine's engaging habits is to steal from unprotected huts all the guns, kettles, knives, and, indeed, everything it can lay—I was going to say *hands* on, even to a blanket or a gridiron, I suppose, to eat. Dry blanket, with cold broiled gridiron ought to satisfy the appetite of even a glutton. If the owner should happen to return and catch him at it, the wolverine has a curious way of sitting up on his hind legs, shading his eyes with one paw, and trying to stare the man out of countenance."

"How uncanny!" said Herbert. "That is quite turning the tables, isn't it? It is man who ought to quell the animal with his eye. But, really, what *can* the creature want with furniture?"

"It is impossible to say. But travellers tell us that the Arctic Fox will sometimes steal things in the same way, even to a thermometer, which could certainly be of no use for food."

"The Arctic fox!" cried Nellie, hastily scribbling a fresh note. "That's another of the polar bear's friends that we haven't heard about. Is he as artful as the English fox, Cousin Harry?"

"Yes, indeed. He learns the tricks of the hunters' traps, and contrives to set them off and seize the bait, without hurting himself. Now, youngsters, I really must say 'good-night'——"

"Oh, but the sable, Cousin Harry," cried Nellie. "I've got its name down, so you must tell us something about it, *please!* And I'm awfully anxious to hear about the lovely little ermine, too."

"The sable is just a kind of weasel, whose fur grows much finer and thicker in polar regions than here, and is so rare, as well as beautiful, that a single skin, though only about four inches broad, is worth from ten to fifteen pounds. The ermine, in the same way, is a stoat, whose coat turns white among the Arctic snows to protect him from discovery by his enemies. Now I am going, positively! For I must catch my train. When I have been to India, and shot a tiger, I'll come and see you all again."

LETTERS FROM INDIA.

LETTER I.

ALL ABOUT THE GREAT CATS.

"RAT-TAT!"

Frank, Herbert, and Nellie Wyman were all seated so quietly around the dining-room table one Saturday evening, preparing lessons for Monday, that the postman's knock was quite startling.

"It's *it!*" exclaimed Frank. And his expectant face showed that "it" was much to be desired.

"It may not be," said Herbie. "It isn't really due till first post, Monday."

"I believe it is," said Nellie, already half way to the front door. "It came Saturday morning one week."

In a minute she was back, waving a letter aloft, with sparkling eyes.

"It *is!*" she cried. "And such a thick one!"

"Who is it addressed to?" asked Frank, holding out his hand.

"All of us. 'Miss and the Masters Wyman.' You'd better open it, Frank, as you are the oldest."

"I wish Cousin Harry wouldn't put 'master' at all," said Frank. "It looks so kiddish. I'd rather have plain 'Herbert' and 'Frank.'"

"Never mind about that," said Herbert. "Let's hear what he says. I expect he's been in a tiger-hunt by this time. Read it out, Frank."

"HYDERABAD,
"*Jan. 23rd*, 19—

"MY DEAR YOUNGSTERS," Frank began,—"I told you in my last that I hoped this time to be able to give you a description of my adventures tiger-shooting, but the affair hasn't come off yet. However, I have been hearing and reading a good deal about the royal beast since I came out here, and it will in some measure atone for the disappointment, and help you to more enjoy the wonderful triumphs I mean to have, if I tell you beforehand a little of what I have learned.

"I dare say you already know that for a practical object-lesson on the general make-up of the tiger, you cannot do better than carefully study your pet pussy-cat, magnifying her in your own mind about fifty times, for the cat is actually a tiger in miniature. A striped tabby comes nearest to a tiger in appearance, only you must imagine a bright orange yellow ground for the black stripes instead of a gray or tawny one. The tiger is one of the most beautiful animals in the world, and his handsome markings are a provision of his Maker for protection, as the black and russet stripes so closely resemble the dark shadows of stems and long, drooping leaves amidst the sere yellow of a sun-baked jungle, that

he glides about among them almost secure from discovery.

"Like the cat, the tiger is of supple and graceful build, leaping and bounding with ease, and generally seizing his prey with a powerful spring. Like the cat, he sees with astonishing clearness in the dusk; like her he moves noiselessly upon softly-padded paws, within which terrible claws, strong and sharp as sickles, lie concealed; like the cat's, also, is his rough tongue, fitted to rasp perfectly clean the bones which his teeth and digestive organs are not adapted for consuming. I'm afraid I must add that in slyness, ferocity, and cruelty to his prey, the tiger has also a counterpart in puss.

"I know Nellie will want to dispute this, for her Totsy is 'such a dear'! Well, so he is to his mistress and her friends (and I am trying to hear of instances of gentleness and gratitude in tame tigers also), but if you want an unvarnished account of pussy hunting, when pussy feels and acts as much like a tiny tiger as possible, just ask Dicky Sparrow, or little Mistress Mouse.

"The tiger is an object of the greatest fear and dread among the natives of India, not only because of its propensity for feeding upon human flesh whenever it gets the chance, but because they superstitiously believe that the spirit of the offended beast can be revenged upon them after death. For this reason they fear to kill even the most confirmed 'man-eater' that haunts a village. As a man-eating female tiger will bring up her cubs to the same terrible habit, there are some parts of India

in which the whole village population would have been destroyed if it had not been for the intervention of the British, and the courage and enterprise of our people in hunting and killing these fearful creatures."

"Hooray for the British!" put in Frank, with a pause to take breath. "You can read a bit now, Herb, if you like. There's a jolly lot more of it."

So Herbert took hold of the thin, closely written sheets, and went on with the narrative:

"One tiger I heard of was a terror to all the villages for thirty or forty miles round, and it was known to have devoured at least one hundred native men, women, and children in a single year.

"The natives have a notion that if the whiskers are singed off the dead tiger, its spirit will not be able to do them any harm. You know that in a cat the whiskers are of the greatest use in guiding it in the darkness, and warning it against entering any hole through which its body could not easily pass. The same is, of course, the case with the tiger, so, supposing a whiskerless tiger to be greatly disabled, and that the tiger-*ghost* will suffer in the same way as the tiger-body, they are most eager to fall upon the carcase and destroy the whiskers the moment the creature is dead.

"This causes much trouble between the natives and the English hunters, as the latter are anxious to preserve the beautiful skin entire, as a trophy of their sport. But neither threats, persuasions, nor bribes will save those handsome whiskers if,

by hook or by crook, the natives can get them off. They will further damage the skin by taking away the claws, which they value, believing them to act as charms.

"The strength of the tiger is enormous. One blow from the huge paw will stun an ox, and, coming down with sledge-hammer weight, will sometimes, in that single blow, smash the animal's skull at the same time.

"Various methods of trapping the tiger have been practised. One of the oldest of these is the placing of a looking-glass in such a position in a trap that the tiger takes it for another of his own kind, and leaping at it, brings the door of the trap down upon himself.

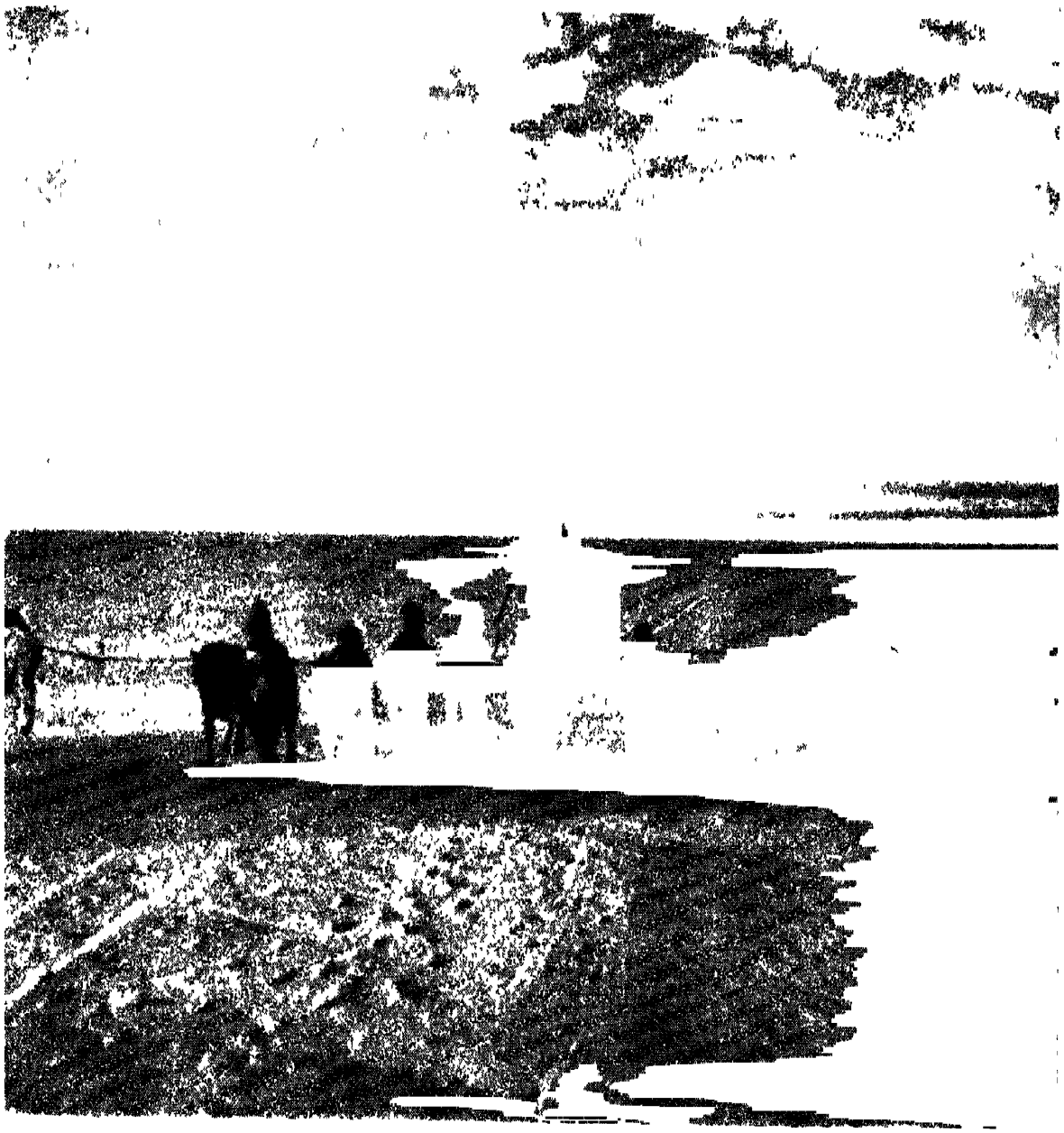
"Another plan, popular in Oude, is to collect a number of broadish leaves, something like our sycamore-leaves, and spread them over with sticky stuff obtained by crushing some berries that grow wild in the jungles. These sticky leaves, with the gummy side uppermost, are then scattered about in spots which the tiger is known to frequent. By and by his majesty comes along, softly and daintily, like a huge tabby puss, and, lo and behold, a leaf or two adhere to his paws.

"Of course, he shakes the paw impatiently, as pussy does when she accidentally steps in the wet, but the leaf does not come off. He then tries to rub it off against his face, but in vain, and, by this time two or three more leaves are glued to his other paws. So he rubs harder than ever, and one eye becomes covered. This is so exasperating

that he rolls on the ground, hoping to get rid of them all, but only succeeds in decorating himself with a garment of leaves from nose to tail, and closing both his eyes. Howling with rage and annoyance, he rolls and plunges more desperately than before, and the more he struggles, the more helpless does he become. The natives are watching, of course, for the result of their leaf-strewing, and the noise he makes soon tells them that they may with safety come and shoot him.

"Another beautiful and terrible creature of the cat kind is the leopard or panther. It is smaller than the tiger, and is noticeably different in the marking of its fur, having open rosettes of velvet-black studded with great regularity over a ground-work of brilliant orange and white. Nothing in the fur way can be more gorgeous than the skin of a wild panther; oddly enough, those dark spots are exactly like what the animal's own paw-marks might be if he had dipped them in ink.

"Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in his "Just-So Stories," gives a delightful explanation (all out of his own head) of how the leopard got his spots. In case you haven't read it, I may tell you he says it was because the leopard wanted to go hunting with the Ethiopian, in a forest of tree trunks that were all 'speckled and sprottled, and spottled, dotted and splashed and lashed and hatched and cross-hatched with shadows.' Because he didn't wish his yellow skin—which was yellow all over at that time—to show up too plainly and scare away the



BOW.

"Some are good steady fellows.'

wild creatures, he got the Ethiopian to mark him all over in patches, with his five black finger-tips.

"The panther, or leopard, is called here the tree-tiger, because it climbs trees with the greatest ease, and will sometimes leap from the top of a tree to the ground with one magnificent bound. There is a rooted antagonism between leopards and monkeys, something like that between dogs and cats. One very mischievous monkey I heard of, on board a ship, could be brought into subjection only by being shown a panther which was also a passenger. Jacko's severest punishment for misdeeds was to be held up by his tail in front of the panther's cage, when he would at once shut his eyes, turn stiff, and pretend to be dead. The panther, meanwhile, would arch his back, and raise his tail, glaring and howling with rage.

"The panther does not often attack human beings, though it commits great havoc among cattle and poultry, and if a panther is lurking about an Indian village, some one loses a goat, a pig, or a chicken, every night. Mr. Wood, I remember, in his 'Handy Natural History,'* says that the cunning of the panther is extreme. It will deliberately show itself to the inhabitants of one village, putting them upon their guard, and then at night go off to another village where it is unsuspected, and commit its depredations there. An even more artful trick, he assures us, was played by a panther which was a man-eater, and

* Religious Tract Society, London.

for a long time baffled the men who sought to destroy it.

"This creature, which one can pardon the natives for dreading as something supernatural in its wickedness, used to make an open attack upon a village, thus drawing out all the armed men and the dogs to one spot. It would then slip away into the jungle, slink round, and come upon the village by the opposite side, which had meanwhile been left undefended, make a dash into it, snatch up a child, and make its escape with its prey. This horrid creature also had a habit of carrying the bodies of its poor little victims up into the trees, and hiding them in the forks of the branches.

"Other leopards and tigers have frequently been killed by men lying in wait for them near a carcase from which they have made one meal, and to which they almost invariably return to finish. This panther, however, was too cunning for that. He never made more than one meal from the same victim, and took care not to appear twice in the same place! Mr. Wood does not add how or when this detestable beast was destroyed, but I fervently trust it is not prowling about India still.

"The cheetah is another sly cat, whose artfulness has been pressed into the service of man. This creature, which is very like the leopard, but of more thin and slender build, has been frequently tamed, and trained to help in hunting the antelope, which is a favourite sport with the natives of India. It is said to be gentle and playful with those to whom it is accustomed.

"The way of hunting with cheetahs is like this. The trained animal, with its eyes covered as the falcon's used to be for hunting game in England, rides out to the spot where the chase is to take place, on a cart by the side of its master. As soon as the herd of antelopes comes in sight, the blind is slipped off the cheetah's eyes and he is allowed to see them. Then he slips off the cart on the side farthest from the antelopes and steals round, creeping along close to the ground under the shelter of any bushes or tussocks of grass that may be in the way, until he is near enough to the antelopes to select his victim, which he then seizes by an immense and powerful bound.

"The master is upon the scene as soon as possible, to prevent the cheetah tearing its prey. He cuts the antelope's throat, and rewards the cheetah with a drink of its blood. While it is enjoying this, the hood is slipped over its eyes again and it is led back to the cart.

"But I must leave off scribbling now, or I shall lose the mail. Look out next week for a glowing account of how Cousin Harry killed a tiger."

LETTER II.

TIGERS WILD AND TIGERS TAME.

NEEDLESS to say, the Wyman children were on the tip-toe of expectancy next time the Indian mail was due. They were listening for the postman all day, and when at last he actually knocked at the door, there was quite a skirmish as to which of them could get to the letter-box first.

And they were not disappointed. The thick letter in the thin envelope had actually arrived, and the first words their eager eyes seized upon, when it was torn open, were these—

"Hurrah, youngsters! Three cheers for your Cousin Harry, please! He has killed his tiger!"

Then the letter proceeded:—"Yes, it is an accomplished fact. For two or three days, I felt very excited, and so proud of myself, it's a wonder somebody didn't punch my head. But I'm gradually calming down, and I think am collected enough this evening, it being mail-day to-morrow, to give you a detailed account of how it was done.

"We started, a party of six of us, last Monday morning, for a village about ten miles from here, which for several years has been haunted by a tiger, said to be of immense size, which has not only committed fearful depredations among the cattle, having in four years destroyed 100 head of cattle from this one village and 250 more in three adjacent villages, but has also carried off a native woman

and two children. Even Nellie will agree with me that to go a-hunting after such a brute as that is only fair sport.

"We were all mounted on elephants—three of us in a howdah on the largest elephant, myself among the number, two more on a second elephant, and my friend, Larkins, on a very small elephant all to himself. This was a little shaggy creature not much larger than a bullock, and he rode it just as if it were a horse. A few people mounted on horses came with us, but more for the sake of being 'in at the death' than of really taking part in the hunt, as horses generally become very nervous and restive when near a tiger, so they cannot be properly depended upon.

"It is the riders on elephants who have to undertake the dangerous work of rousing the ferocious beast out of his lair, and of shooting him as he bounds along. The elephant itself is not without fear of the tiger, but he will stand firm all the same, and his keen scent, his great strength, and his immense height, which lifts his riders far out of the tiger's reach, all combine to make him the most suitable creature for the dangerous game.

"Sometimes the tiger, when hard pressed, will spring upon the nearest elephant, and generally goes for his trunk. This the elephant has the sense to throw high above his head, when Mr. Tiger makes the acquaintance of a yard of well sharpened ivory instead. A well-trained elephant has thus been known to transfix the tiger upon his tusks and pin him to the ground.

"But if the tiger should succeed, as it sometimes does, in fastening four sets of steely claws into the poor elephant's flesh, even that huge beast loses its wits, and starts off, crashing through the jungle, roaring with pain and terror, and startling all the other animals. Now and then an elephant will feel quaky at first sight of the tiger, and turn tail, and then his riders had better just look out! For the tiger will go for him like a shot, and very likely succeed in springing upon his back.

"Our first surprise was meeting a tigress—probably the mate of the gentleman we were really after. Instead of trying to escape under cover of the long jungle grasses, she charged straight for the line of elephants and beaters, and actually broke through uninjured. We knew, by her daring, that she was fighting for her cubs, no doubt hoping that if she made a way through, they would follow her. But apparently they had not the pluck to do so, for we saw nothing of them, just then, and she escaped.

"The elephants soon scented the near neighbourhood of the male tiger, and then Larkins, who is a bit of a 'dare-devil,' urged the driver of the beast he was on to make it trample about among the tall grass just where the scent was strongest. The elephant didn't quite like the job, and trumpeted loudly, and then it appeared that they had got to such close quarters, that the tiger must either show fight or be trampled upon.

"He accordingly sprang upon the elephant's hind-quarters, with his front claws in the cushioned pad

on the animal's back, and the hind ones in the flesh of its thigh. If you picture to yourself a gigantic cat, wild with terror, you can imagine just how it was done.

"The poor elephant dashed through the jungle, shrieking with pain, the tiger hanging on behind, and Larkins—well, I haven't enquired how Larkins felt—but we all followed in hot pursuit. We hadn't expected quite such an exciting adventure as this. Larkins dared not fire himself, because we were so close behind, riders and beaters as well—beaters are the men who beat or stir up the jungle, to make the tigers come out of hiding—that, with the uncertain movements of the scared elephant, he would probably have injured some of us, and *we* were half afraid to fire, lest we should hit him instead of the tiger. And plunging as they were through the tangle of tree stems and grass, it was as much as Larkins could do to hold on, without attempting to handle his gun.

"Presently, I found myself for an instant in a favourable position for getting a bullet into old Stripes. I didn't hesitate for the wink of an eyelid, but 'Crack!' went my rifle, and, to my intense joy, I saw the tiger quiver, and relax his hold. This nerved me for another shot, and this time he dropped to the ground. Of course, the danger was far from over then, for the wounded and doubly enraged animal was ready to turn upon the first elephant who came up with him, but a third bullet, catching him between the eyes just as he prepared to make a leap at my elephant, put an instant end to his

suffering and our peril. You may imagine the size and weight of this fellow, when I tell you it took thirty men to lift the carcase!

"We then sought out the lair, where we found two little cubs. The men killed one, but the smaller one they brought back to our camp, and we fastened it, with a collar and chain belonging to one of our dogs, to a pole in the tent.

"It was a pretty creature, harmless and playful as a kitten, and I had visions of training it and bringing it home as a present to Nellie.

"But just as it was growing dusk, and we were enjoying a good supper after the fatigue and excitement of the day, we were startled by hearing the unmistakable roar of a tiger, quite near.

"The tiger-kitten heard it too, and made frantic efforts, *me-owing* loudly, meanwhile, to free itself from its tether.

"The next instant a magnificent full-grown tigress sprang into the middle of the tent, seized the young one by the 'scruff' of its neck, just as a cat does her kitten, snapped the chain, and, without attempting to molest any of us, dashed away into the jungle and disappeared.

"We were all so completely taken by surprise, and the whole transaction was so rapid, that not a shot was fired. I was not at all sorry for this, for the brave mother deserved to succeed in her daring attempt to rescue her kidnapped baby; but I expect we shall have to go for her another day; as a creature whose existence is a public danger to human life cannot be spared on merely

sentimental grounds. This was, of course, the tigress which had run the gauntlet of our guns in the morning—the mate of the one we had killed.

"I ought to tell you that tiger-hunting with elephants is not practised nearly so much as it used to be. Before long, I have no doubt, it will be quite done away with; but we all felt we should like a taste of the sport in the good old-fashioned way we had all read about and seen pictures of from our boyish days.

"Our English sportsmen now most frequently hunt the tiger on foot. A large party, consisting of hunters, drivers, and well-trained dogs, boldly invades the jungle, led by a *shikarree*, or chief beater.

"They are all well-armed with double-barrelled rifles, the native attendants who follow close behind the Englishmen carrying theirs all ready loaded to hand to their masters the moment the latter have fired. More men bring up the rear with a drum, cymbals, tambourines, and so forth, with which they keep up a din hideous enough, one would think, to drive any beast from its lair.

"As if all this were not enough to rouse the tiger, still more men come along with slings and stones, which stones they throw into the jungle, over the heads and far in advance of the rest of the party. Every now and then, a man will climb into a tree-top to take stock of the scene, and notice if there is any movement of the long grass which may betray the whereabouts of Stripes.

"If they observe that the fruit still hangs upon

the trees, they know that they are getting very near the tiger's den, for it shows that the monkeys have been afraid to approach and gather it. And if, above all the noise, the scream of a peacock is heard, the hunters know that the bird from his perch high up in some branch, has seen the tiger stealing away. I believe that both these signs are infallible.

"This crowd of people, and the noise they make—to which, I should have told you, the repeated firing of pistols is added—not only arouses, but scares and confuses the tiger, and when at last it is discovered and driven out, it seldom has courage to make an attack, but is soon despatched by the bullets of the huntsmen.

"Since I wrote to you last, I have heard of several other native modes of destroying the tiger. One of these is by laying the poisoned carcase of a bullock near the tiger's lair, and thus tempting him to his death.

"But by far the most daring and romantic method I ever heard of is that of the native hunter who places himself in a large bamboo cage, which is securely fastened between two trees. Here, in the depths of the jungle, at the dead of night, armed only with the native *tulwar* or small sword, he sits and waits for the ferocious beast!

"Fancy hearing the rustling of the grasses, as the huge cat noiselessly steals along, sniffing for prey. Fancy seeing the great round eyes glowing with green fire, coming closer and closer through the velvet blackness of the forest. And then the

spring, and the savage fury of the gigantic teeth and talons trying to tear the cage to pieces, and seize the meaty morsel within. The hunter must have nerves of steel to endure it. But he does until he sees the chance of a fair aim at the furry breast on the other side of the bars. Then the *tulwar* flashes, and generally with such force and directness that the tiger loosens his hold on the cage and rolls over dead."

Here Herbert, who was reading, paused to give full opportunity for the "O-O-Oh's" and "Ah-h-h's" of admiration with which this thrilling picture was greeted.

"Just think of it!" said Frank. "That native chap must have some pluck, mustn't he? I wonder he doesn't have a fit while he's waiting."

"The suspense must be something awful, mustn't it?" said Herbert.

"I shall be afraid to go to bed to-night," said Nellie, in an awe-stricken tone. "I know I shall dream I'm in the jungle, shut up in a cage."

"No, you won't, goosey!" said Herbert. "There's a lot more here about pets, written on purpose for you. You'd better read it yourself, to take away the taste of the other."

So Nellie went on with Cousin Harry's letter:

"I believe I promised," he wrote, "to try and find out whether tigers have ever been really tamed.

"I cannot get any true story of a grown-up tiger having been made an actual pet, though tiger-kittens have often been kept by those who captured

them until they grew troublesome or dangerous. But the leopard, of which I think I told you something in my last, can be easily tamed, if caught young and treated kindly, and I have been assured that many of them will become as gentle and domestic as a pet cat.

"The best story of a tame leopard is that told by an English lady, of one which she reduced to complete submission by indulging its passion for scent! You know how certain perfumes are said to fascinate a cat. Well, it seems that the leopard tribe has an extraordinary love of lavender, and lavender water. Some one, in this leopard's presence, once pulled out a scented pocket-handkerchief, and Saï, which was the leopard's name, seized it, and simply tore it to shreds, in a kind of ecstasy. Nobody dared to open a bottle of perfume if this creature was anywhere near, as his excitement became so great.

"As a reward for good behaviour, and to retain her power over the leopard, the lady used to indulge him occasionally with a little treat of lavender water all to himself. She would make a sort of cup of stiff paper, and pour a few drops of the scent into it, and put it through the bars of his cage. Saï would seize the gift with the greatest delight, purring and rubbing himself backwards and forwards against the bars, like your cat will against the legs of a chair, and he would roll over and over on every spot where the scent had got spilt, as long as there was the faintest trace of perfume remaining.

"This leopard became in time so tame that he was allowed to wander about the house quite freely, and would follow his master, who was governor of a fort in Africa, like a dog.

"Once he gave one of the women servants a terrible fright, by springing on to her back when she was on her knees sweeping with a short broom. He only wanted a romp, but the poor woman thought she was about to be killed and eaten there and then.

"The other servants, whom her screams brought to the spot, thought so too, for, as soon as they saw Saï mounted on top of the crouching woman, and waving his tail in triumph, they fled, yelling in panic. When the governor himself appeared on the scene, however, he soon called the leopard off. The woman was quite uninjured, but nearly dead from terror.

"One can't help fancying that most of the people who lived in the fort went in daily fear of their lives, for they never knew what whim the huge cat might take into his head. Once, even the governor himself received a shock. Saï, having missed his master for some time, and gone about searching for him, at last found him seated at his writing-table. The governor was so busy that he did not notice the leopard's approach, and he was dreadfully startled when, with one tremendous bound, the animal sprang upon his shoulder.

"For the moment he really thought that the savage nature of the forest-creature had suddenly broken out; but the next moment the soft rubbing

of a furry head against his cheek, and a vigorous purring in his ear, showed him that poor Saï only wanted to show his affection and his delight at having found him.

"The governor's children, however, had not the least fear of the leopard, and like most animals, Saï would let them do pretty much as they liked with him. They would share with him a favourite window, which overlooked the main street of the town. You have often noticed, I dare say, the appearance of great interest with which a cat will sit at a window and watch the passers by. Well, Saï's delight was to stand on his hind legs against this window, his forepaws on the ledge and his nose between them, looking at all that went on below. But, on one occasion, the children wanted to come just where he was, and as he wouldn't get down when he was told, they just took hold of his tail and dragged him away!

"Even this liberty the good-natured beast did not resent. The worst thing we are told that he ever did was to awaken, with a smart box on the ear, the black boy who was supposed to be his keeper, and who had gone to sleep at his post!

"All the same, I think I would rather not choose a pet whose disposition I should ever feel any misgivings about. And, on the whole, I am rather glad I wasn't able to keep that tiger-kitten for Nellie. Ask mother what she thinks about it.

"Your affectionate,

"COUSIN HARRY."

LETTER III.

ABOUT THE LION FAMILY.

A FEW weeks subsequent to the letter from Cousin Harry about the tiger-hunt, came the following:

"DEAREST CHILDREN,—I have just received your delightful 'patch-work' letter. I am so glad you were interested in what I was able to tell you about Stripes and Spots. But it's shocked entoirely I am at Miss Nellie! She actually has developed such a thirst for the chase, that she asks for the story of a lion-hunt, only stipulating that the slaughtered beast shall be warranted a man-eater! And Nellie, too! But I believe you boys put her up to it.

"Now, I don't know how I am going to gratify you. In the first place, although the tiger with a lust for human flesh is somewhat common in India, the man-eating lion is quite rare. And it is only in certain parts of India that the lion is now to be found at all. So I fear I shall not have any first-hand adventures to tell you. But I have been making many inquiries among my friends here, and have managed to get together some scraps of information and a story or two.

"The Indian lion is not nearly so large or so formidable as his African relative, nor does he appear, from all I can gather, to be quite such a kingly and courageous creature as we have generally been accustomed to think him.

"The man-eaters are almost always aged and feeble animals who no longer have strength and activity enough to hunt the creatures which are their lawful prey, so they just hang about villages in the hope of picking up stray or half tame cattle. Then, if an old woman or young child comes in their way, they will descend to the meanness of devouring them. I have heard that these man-eating lions are usually mangy and wretched-looking creatures. This is probably because they are old, and diseased, as I have said.

"But, of course, if a man venturing into the jungle meets a lion, it is a different matter. Even then, I am assured by several persons whose word I cannot doubt, that a bold and dauntless bearing will actually scare him away.

"A lion seen abroad in the day-time will pass a man without seeming to notice him, but in the evening he grows hungry, and begins to hunt for his supper.

"The strength of the lion is enormous. An African lion has been known to carry off a cow, her legs dragging on the ground, with as much ease as a cat does a rat, and would even jump over a ditch with its burden. Another carried a horse for about a mile from the place where he had killed it; and, still more wonderful, a third, who had seized a young bullock, was chased for five hours by horsemen, and never dropped his prey the whole time! The weight of a man would be a mere trifle to a creature like that.



"It will file a deep groove all round a large sized tree, deepening the cut until the trunk is completely sawn through"

"The lioness—whom, of course, you know, has not the grand mane which gives her mate his noble air, and is not a very handsome beast—is very savage indeed when she has young ones to protect. She generally has from two to four cubs at a time. These are pretty little creatures, very like large kittens, being more or less clearly striped, the markings branching from a dark line that runs down the middle of their backs. Any one who did not know might mistake them for baby-tigers. They mew like kittens, too, only louder, of course, and tumble about and play with one another like most other young things. They change their tabby fur, and get a mane, when they are between one and two years old.

"When a lion is about five years old, he is quite 'grown-up,' yet he has as long a life as a man. One named 'Pompey,' who died in the Tower of London, where lions used to be kept for show, had been there for seventy years; so he must have been quite a great age. Another died at the age of sixty-three.

"I forgot to tell you one funny thing about the lion; he has one little extra claw—where do you think?—right at the tip of his tail! If you go to the Natural History Museum at South Kensington and look at the stuffed lions there, you will be able to see it for yourselves, quite plainly. Nobody has yet been able to guess what this tiny claw or prickle is for. But, in olden times, it was believed that the lion lashed his tail and flogged himself with this goad to work himself into a rage. Wasn't

that a queer notion? As nothing the Creator has made can be without meaning or use, I have no doubt clever men will some day find out why the lion has this prickle in his tail.

"Lions are every year becoming more rare, even in those parts of the world where they are most numerous. The ancient Romans used to have hundreds of the fierce brutes caught and brought to Rome, where they were kept to devour criminals. And the same barbarous custom was common among the Persians long years even before that, as the story of Daniel will show.

"Many of those same 'criminals,' who were brought into the arena and torn to pieces for the amusement of the ladies and gentlemen of Rome, sitting upon the theatre-like seats of the Coliseum, had done nothing worse than worship Jesus Christ instead of the idols of paganism. This seems very dreadful, but we cannot help hoping that these innocent victims were delivered from the worst of the agony and terror in the same way that Dr. Livingstone was, when he was seized by a lion.

"Do you know the story? The traveller, finding himself face to face with a lion, fired at him; but the shots not at once killing him, the creature was only made angry by the pain, but in no way disabled. Then the lion sprang at Dr. Livingstone and seized him by the shoulder, and both rolled over on the ground together. The lion shook the man as a terrier-dog shakes a rat, growling horribly meanwhile. And that shake, extraordinary

to relate, caused a dull, sleepy sort of feeling to come over Dr. Livingstone, so that, although he never lost consciousness, he felt no pain, nor did he even feel the least bit frightened.

"Meanwhile, a Hottentot attendant was trying to shoot the lion from a distance of ten or fifteen yards. His gun was a bad one, and didn't go off properly; but the lion saw what he was at, and leaving Dr. Livingstone, he made an angry rush for the Hottentot. But after biting this black man severely, he left him to spring upon another who was trying to spear him, and while seizing this third victim, the lion suddenly dropped down dead, no doubt owing to the bullets Dr. Livingstone had put into him a few moments before.

"The doctor was much impressed by his own remarkable experience. He firmly believed, and so, I think, may we, that the stupid feeling produced by the shake the lion gave him—which was just the kind of shake a cat gives a mouse—is a merciful provision of God for sparing pain and terror to all creatures killed by lions, tigers, or cats. Tell Nellie to think of this to comfort her heart next time her pussy catches a bird.

"Lions thrive very well in England, and in captivity. They make themselves quite at home and bring up large families.

"A lioness, who was herself born in the Irish Zoological Gardens, presented her keepers during her life with no less than fifty-four cubs, of which she actually reared fifty, losing only four. She was both gentle and handsome, and was known

as the 'Old Girl.' Unhappily, she died of chronic bronchitis when only sixteen years old.

"While she was lying ill, she seemed very much bothered by the rats which came to pick up scraps from her food. When in health, lions do not mind the rats a bit, nor attempt to hurt them, but when the rats know that the lion is dying, they begin to gnaw his toes! To save poor 'Old Girl' from this torment, a smart little rat-terrier was put into her cage.

"At first she seemed displeased, and growled at him; but presently in came Mr. Rat, who was greeted by the dog with an instant toss into the air, and came down dead.

"Then 'Old Girl,' saw the meaning of it. She coaxed the little terrier to her side, and folded her huge paw affectionately round him, cuddling him to her breast.

"Thus they slept every night for the last six weeks that the lioness lived, the terrier being ever on the alert to see the rats did not disturb his royal mistress.

"A lion seldom attacks any creature by daylight, or in bright moonlight. If you were to be out walking on a sunny day and met a lion, he would probably stare at you for a minute or two, and if you had courage to stare back at him, and not run away, he would soon turn tail, and after walking off in a calm and dignified manner as long as he thought you were looking, would bolt for all he was worth as soon as he fancied himself well out of sight.

"But hunger will drive any animal to be more ferocious than it is its nature to be. I remember once reading the story of a traveller, who, when crossing a lonely plain in Africa, became aware that he was being followed by a large lion. For the moment he gave himself up for lost, as there seemed no possible way of escape. He dared not run, lest that should cause the animal to spring at once, yet it was gaining upon him every minute. He was unarmed, having nothing with him but a stick. His position, indeed, seemed hopeless.

"At one part of the road, however, was a high cliff, and on the other side of the cliff, a deep valley. Warily the man climbed to the brink of this precipice, and crouching behind a rock, hastily took off his hat and coat, and stuck them on his stick to look as much like a man as possible. This arrangement he fixed upright, so as to just show above the rock, and lay down as close as possible under its shelter himself. Just below and beyond the place where he lay, the cliff went down a sheer two hundred feet.

"The man waited, with beating heart, knowing that the lion would noiselessly follow him up to his retreat. Would his plan succeed, or not!

"Presently he heard a low growl, like distant thunder. There was a mighty leap at the stick, which took the lion clean over the spot where his intended victim lay, and the next moment the creature was lying dead among the stones below.

"As a rule, taught by experience, and doubtless by warnings which wild-beast parents are able

in some way to give their children, the lion is extremely suspicious of anything that looks as if it might be connected with a trap of any kind.

"A runaway horse, held fast by the catching of his bridle in the stump of a tree, remained untouched for two days, though footprints on the sand showed that lions had been walking round and round, examining him. They evidently came to the conclusion that he was merely the bait of some kind of snare. It seems that, for this reason, to tie up an animal keeps it safe from lions.

"On another occasion, two lions came within a few feet of where several oxen were tied to a wagon and a single sheep to a tree. Yet, though they roared threateningly, they feared to make a spring. Three travellers were kept safe one night by the fact that the ox on which, by turns, they had been riding, was secured to a bush close by.

"The Arabs, however, are often too clever for the lion, with all his caution. They will dig a deep pit, and so artfully conceal it with green branches that the animal attempts to walk over it, and goes through with a crash. Or, they will prepare a hiding-place built of rocks and stone, and roofed with timber, with just one tiny hole through which the barrel of a rifle can peep. Here the hunter hides himself, a carcase of some kind being laid close by as a bait.

"By and by, the lion comes along, and falls upon the meat. While he is busy devouring it, the concealed man fires on him. This is all very well if the aim is good, and the beast fatally wounded at

first; but if he is only hurt and infuriated, he may fall upon the man's hiding-place, and tear it to pieces in his rage, in which case the hunter has a poor chance of escape.

"As I have said so much about the enmity between the lion and man, I should like to wind up by saying that certain African tribes of savages look upon him as a *friend*, and have been known to entreat a European hunter to spare his life. This was because he kills so many more deer, and creatures of that kind, than he can eat, that almost untouched carcases are left by him which the savages can seize for themselves. So they regard him as a provider of food.

"Stories of really tame lions are not very common. Of course you have all heard that old one about the slave, Androcles, who won the affection of a wild lion of the desert by removing a thorn from its paw? And you remember the wonderful ending of that story—how the slave, for offending his master, was condemned to death in that terrible arena I mentioned a little way back, and how, wonderful to relate, the lion brought out of the den to devour him was the very one whom kindness had made his friend. So, instead of springing upon Androcles and tearing him to pieces, the great beast lay down at the slave's feet and fawned upon him like a dog. Then the emperor, hearing the story, commanded that Androcles should be pardoned and released.

"There is another story of a lion which was relieved of pain by a hermit, named Jerome, who lived for some time in the desert. This lion was

quite subdued by the good man's kindness, and when he went home to his monastery, his strange pet followed him, to the amazement and terror of all the other monks. I remember seeing a quaint old painting in one of the picture-galleries abroad, of St. Jerome's lion walking into the convent garden, with a most engaging smile upon its face, and the brethren fleeing in every direction.

"And here, I think, dear children, I must bring my lion letter to a close, and go to bed, for it is very late. Some day, perhaps, I may be able to tell you more.

"Your affectionate

"Cousin Harry."

THREE FRIENDS IN A FIELD.

"YES, I've seen something of life in my time," said Blaze, the old chestnut horse, gazing thoughtfully out over the meadow where he, and about a dozen others, of various types and colours, were peacefully grazing.

It was a large and pleasant green meadow, bordered by a clear, rippling stream, and it belonged to a Home of Rest for Horses, so that all the animals that enjoyed its freedom and pasturage were more or less of invalids, though not actually ill. A few were aged beasts who lived at the Home always, their expenses being paid by kind and grateful owners, so that, after a life of hard work, they might end their days in comfort. Some were animals recovering from the effects of overstrain or accident; but the greater number of boarders at this Happy Home were simply hard workers enjoying a brief period of well-earned repose in the midst of a round of honest and willing labour.

Horses of many different kinds might here be met with, from the worn-out carriage horse, whose master had no longer any use for him, but was unwilling to consign him to the tender mercies of strangers, to the sleek and massive creature whose daily business was to draw a London parcels van, and the knobby hack whose poor, but humane owner, although glad to let him be hired out by the day for any sort of work he could do—drawing

* This story was written in the days when cab horses were a matter of course—to-day, of course, there are hardly any left.

a four-wheeler cab, hauling coal-sacks, or carrying home baskets of washing—was anxious to give him a few weeks' holiday, even at the expense of borrowing meanwhile, from the Home of Rest, another animal to take his place.

"I've come across a few different sorts of people, too," continued Blaze, speaking to the two friends, with whom he had become acquainted at the Home. "I've lived with men that it has been an honour and a pleasure to work for; in fact, you felt you could never do too much for them; and I've known one or two that—well, you could only tell they were men by their clothes, for in their conduct they were worse than brutes."

"I dare say a life like yours may have been rather amusing," observed Lady Zara, the white Arab mare, in an encouraging tone intended to suggest that she would not feel above being amused herself, by hearing something about it.

Smiler, the cart-horse, also pricked up his ears and came a little nearer. They were all rather interested in Blaze, for he had been living in London for many years, and was supposed to know a good deal about town ways.

"I was born in the country," said Blaze, "and the first thing I remember is trotting about a nice meadow like this, at my mother's side. This meadow was divided by a low hedge only from the garden of my master's house, and my mother used to spend a great deal of her time with her head over the hedge, looking out to be spoken to

or to have her nose rubbed by any of the family who happened to pass by.

"My mother adored my master's eldest daughter. I have often heard her say she would do anything for her. It was this young lady who gave me my name of 'Blaze,' because of the white streak down my forehead and nose. She generally came to see us with apples or carrots in a basket. We knew they were for us, and one day when she set the basket down close to the hedge while she spoke to the gardener for a minute, my mother, thinking to save the lady trouble, just reached over, and picking up the basket with her teeth, emptied out the apples for herself.

"The gardener burst out laughing. He said he'd 'never seed sich a thing,' and 'wouldn't 'a' believed it if anybody had told him.' My mother remarked to me that this was nothing to the cleverness of some of her relations, and she could have told that man things, if he had understood our language, which would have made him open his eyes.

"It was then, I remember, that she first told me the tale of my grandfather, who learned to save the groom trouble by regularly filling his own water-trough from a pump. He had seen the man do it many a time, and knew that if he grasped the pump-handle firmly with his teeth, and worked it up and down, water would flow. It was as simple as possible!

"Another horse my mother knew, contrived, night after night, to get out of his stable and go to feast upon the sweet, growing corn in a field some

little distance away. To do this, he had to pull the string fastened to the latch of his stable-door with his teeth, and then open the door. He was also cunning enough to shut the door after him when he went back to the stable, so that, for some time, he enjoyed his stolen dainties without being found out.

"But I was talking about my mother and her kind mistress. The lady would say to my mother, 'Kiss me, Molly!' and my mother would roll up her lip, and draw it, soft as velvet, down the lady's cheek. Then she would say, 'Good-bye, Molly. Shake hands!' and my mother would gently put her right hoof into the lady's hand. Sometimes the lady would hide a carrot in a pocket of her jacket, and would let my mother smell her all over, and find out which one it was in. Then my mother would carefully lift up the flap of the pocket and draw the carrot out.

"My master was a good man, too. It was he who, with a patience and gentleness that I shall ever remember with gratitude, first broke me in to work. It was his pride never to use a whip, and he never failed to teach the horses he trained himself to understand and obey a word.

"It was one day when being driven by him, that I had the greatest fright of my life.

"In a quiet country road we came upon the most fearful-looking creature you ever beheld. It was ten times larger than the biggest horse I ever saw, with a horrible, huge yellow body, things like immensely broad carriage-wheels instead of

legs, and a head with a hideous, wide, grinning mouth, and great goggle eyes. Oh, my friends, this was the first time I had seen a motor-car, and I trembled in every limb with fear.

"I have since then learned, from sad experience, that there are some men in charge of horses who are so stupid or so brutal as actually to flog a poor terrified creature instead of pitying it, and thus add pain of body to the agony of fear. But my dear master was not one of those. Finding that I was too helpless with horror to be able to pass the monster, he got down from his seat, and taking hold of my bridle with one hand, he gently patted and soothed me with the other.

"'Come along, Blaze; come along, old fellow!' he said. 'There's nothing to hurt you. Come and we'll look at this queer thing together.'"

Shaking all over and streaming with perspiration I let my master lead me close up to the hideous thing. Even then I could not help turning my head as much away from it as possible, hoping that I need not see it after all.

"But my master, though kind, was very firm. 'You must take a good look at the old motor, my boy,' he said, 'so that you will know it when you see it again, and remember that it can't do you any harm.' So, patting and stroking me, he made me stand quiet for several minutes beside the thing, and then turn back and walk past it again and yet again, until I was at last convinced that the great ugly creature was really no more to be afraid of than a post or a pump.

"My next master," he continued, "was a man of quite a different sort. His only idea of making a horse go, was to keep on slashing it with the whip, and saying, 'Get up, ye beast!' I think that was the only thing he ever did say to me. He would have thought it great nonsense if anybody had told him how a horse loves to be talked to, and what a deal he will do for merely being spoken to."

"I can quite believe that," said Lady Zara. "People who are fortunate enough to own horses of our breed"—and she tossed her beautiful head with an air of pride—"know that they are to be controlled by the voice only."

"There was a steep hill near where we lived," Blaze went on, "and whenever I came to it with a heavy load behind me, my master, without waiting to see what I would do, would begin laying on the whip, and roaring 'Get up, ye brute!' I *did* 'get up,' from fear of a worse thrashing, but it was with no goodwill, I can tell you.

"One day I was borrowed by a neighbour of my master's, and had to drag a load for him up that same hill. To my amazement, when we got to the rising ground, instead of cracking the whip, this good man appeared a little distance ahead of me, holding in his hand a delicious bunch of hay. He offered it to me, and, of course, I made an effort to reach it. But the man kept walking backwards, saying, 'All right, old chap, but you must come a bit further for it.'

"So I kept going on and on, hardly noticing

the weight of the cart behind me, encouraged by the smell of that hay. When we were about half-way up, he let me rest, and enjoy my prize. Then he took another bunch out of his bag, and went on as before. Bless you! I got to the top of the hill before I knew what I was doing, and without one single cut from the whip.

"I wished very much that this good man had been my own master. But I am glad to say I stayed with the flogger only a short time, and what do you think was the reason he got rid of me?

"Would you believe it? he expected me to work hard seven days a week. Every week day I was labouring to help him earn his living, and on Sunday, instead of having a few hours to rest my weary bones, I was supposed to drag heavy waggonette-loads of holiday-makers miles and miles into the country and back. Oh, yes, he would crowd them all in — men, women, and children — as many as could possibly find a seat, all feeling very happy and jolly, and enjoying themselves very much, while the poor dumb creature in the shafts was ready to drop from fatigue.

"But I wasn't going to do it. I'd made up my mind to that. I had been brought up from a colt with proper notions as to Sabbath rest, and I was determined to have my one day in seven, or know the reason why. So when they harnessed me, I wouldn't budge an inch. They beat, they kicked, they cursed, but I planted my four feet, and stood firm. My master's wife, who was not a bad sort,

seemed a bit frightened. She said it was so very strange for a horse to know when it was Sunday—(what fools people do take us to be!) and she had a superstitious fear that some ill-luck might befall them if they persisted in making me go. So, after a few fruitless attempts, they gave it up. But the man said that a beast that was no use on a Sunday, was no use to him at all, and as soon as possible he sold me.

"I never had to fight that battle again, I'm glad to say. My next master always let me have my Sundays in peace, and I lived with him for three years. It was a good situation. I had a clean, comfortable stable, plenty of good food and kind treatment. It is his son I am working for now, who has sent me down here for a holiday, and I hope to do many more years' service for him when I go back.

"The London cab is my line of business, you know," Blaze continued, not without an air of pride, for he always liked people to know that he was no "country bumpkin." "And I've no end of acquaintances about town. Cab-horses have some of the funniest names you ever heard. I suppose there is such a number of them that their masters have some trouble to think of any name that hasn't been used about five hundred times before. There's Scorch and Blister — they were bought one blazing hot July day; Mud, Slush, and Puddle were named in memory of weather of a different kind, and so were Drizzle and Nor'easter. Old Pea-soup was brought home in a London



B.O W.

'Slip away into the jungle, slink round . . . "

fog — and he's so stupid that I reckon he has been in a fog ever since."

"You are not often driven by the man who owns you, are you?" asked Lady Zara. "A lot of you live in a big stable together, don't you? and cabmen come and hire you out by the day. At least so I've heard."

"A good many ordinary cab-horses live like that," Blaze admitted. "Oh, yes; Gaiters and Gooseberry do, and most of those I just now mentioned. But I am owned by a man who can afford to drive his own cab, and a very smart turnout it is, I can tell you. My harness is always polished up till it looks like jet and silver, while my own coat shines like satin. I wear a necklace of tiny bells to let people know when I am coming — the fidgety tinkling of them got rather on my nerves at first, but I'm used to it now, and one doesn't mind putting up with a trifle to please a master who studies one's comfort in so many ways. Ours is a hansom cab, with rubber tires on the wheels.

"In the summer it has a cool-looking striped holland shade, and my ears are protected from teasing flies by neat little caps with red tassels on them. And in the day-time my master puts a pink rose in each of the lamp-glasses. So you may guess how gay and nice we look."

"I suppose you don't go out much at night-time?" said Zara.

"Hardly ever. My master knows I need my rest as much as he does. Indeed, I pity most of

the poor cab-horses who do night-work, for they are really the least able to bear it. Old, weak, and diseased, they too often are, and look so thin and miserable that, if seen in the day-time, no kind-hearted person would like to hire them. And, to make matters worse, in many cases they are horses who have been hard at work of some kind for the greater part of the day."

"Dear me! Poor things!" said Lady Zara, with an air of aristocratic pity. "I must say I never see a cab-horse—except, of course, a few like yourself—without sincerely pitying them."

"Oh, it's not a bad life in the main!" returned Blaze, anxious to stand up for the dignity of his own profession. "Those let out to drivers by good cab-masters are well fed—a sack of corn a week, a good bran-mash on Saturdays, a comfortable bed of straw or peat litter, and always one day's rest in seven. Of course, the hansom horse has the best of it, though sometimes he will have to do as much as forty miles in a day. But he never has more than three people to carry — two passengers and the driver, and little or no luggage.

"It's the way the four-wheeler is often loaded up that makes one's heart ache for the horse—especially at low-class weddings and funerals. Fancy a wedding-party such as poor old Buttons had to drag up East Hill, Wandsworth, one day—five full-grown people inside, a fat man beside the driver on the box, three more big men on the roof, and three hobble-de-hoys behind!"

"Disgraceful!" murmured Lady Zara; and Smiler

said, "Why, it's as much as I should care to haul along myself."

"People going off for their holidays will sometimes crowd five or six inside, and a boy or two on the box, as well as a mountain of heavy luggage fastened on to the roof. Not much of a holiday for the poor brute that takes them to the station! And to cap all," concluded Blaze with a snort of indignation, "they sometimes run their time so close they want the cabman to whip his horse all the way to catch their train."

"No," he went on again, after the grunts of sympathy had subsided, and no sound was heard but a quiet munching of grass; "the life isn't a bad one for the average hansom cab-horse with a good driver. The worst thing he has to complain of in London life is the number of different kinds of roads he has to run over, and the sudden change from one sort to another, for, if he isn't very keen and quick in changing his step, he will probably come a cropper.

"There's asphalt, granite, wood, and macadam; I don't like either asphalt or granite—asphalt just wet enough to be slippery is simply frightful. You need to have learned skating to get over it at all. I don't mind good honest macadam, but the nicest of all is wood lightly sprinkled with gravel. Another trouble is the bearing-rein—that abominable contrivance for making a horse's head stick up stiff as wood. That's an instrument of torture, if you like! But so many drivers, now, are learning how cruel it is, and what an ugly effect it gives to the

appearance of the horse, that we hope it will soon go out of fashion altogether."

"Your life has been very different from mine," said Lady Zara, dreamily. "I, as you know, am of pure Arab descent; and Arabs are the aristocracy of the horse world."

"Your ladyship illustrates in your own self the truth of what you say," replied Blaze gallantly. And, indeed, the beauty and grace of Lady Zara won the admiration of every one who saw her. Her colour was milk-white, and her body slender, but, at the same time, muscular and strong. Her ears were pointed and delicate, her mane and tail long and silky looking, but her greatest beauty was her large, dark eyes, animated and expressive as those of an intelligent dog.

"In my native country of Arabia," she said, "we are very differently treated from most of you poor creatures in this barbarous land. I don't mean to say that we are kept in luxury, far from it; we are exposed to the weather at all times, and our food—which is sometimes barley, and, at others, the milk of the camel, or a paste made of dates and water, mixed with dried clover and other herbs, according to the part of the country in which we live—our food is never more abundant than is just necessary for our health and strength.

"But we are the honoured and trusted friends of the family. We live in the midst of our master's household. We play with his children, who roll and tumble about us as we lie on the ground, without a shadow of fear. Sometimes we are tied up at the

tent door; at other times we are allowed to frolic in perfect liberty, as pet dogs are in this country. Our masters understand that we are gentlefolk, and keep our pedigrees—that is, the list of our grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and our family history for many years back—as carefully as the histories of human families are kept in other countries.

"Quite a poor man has been known to refuse large sums of money rather than part from his beloved horse. I heard of one, once, who persuaded a rich Englishman to offer him more and yet more gold coins for his beautiful gray horse, until an immense sum was reached, and the Englishman, who was much set on having the horse, fancied it was his. Then, to his astonishment, the Arab turned round and said, 'Christian, I can now make a boast of the price that has been offered me for my horse; but I would not part with him for all the gold that you or any other man possesses.'

"The Englishman told this story to another man who knew the owner of the horse, saying he supposed he must be very rich, since he could afford to refuse so much money. But the other replied, 'Indeed, he is not. He possesses nothing in the world but that horse. He bought it when it was a colt, selling his tents, his flocks, and everything else that he had to raise enough money to get it. And now he loves it as if it were his own child.' Needless to say," concluded Lady Zara, "we amply respond to the affection and confidence with

which we are treated, by the most loving devotion to our kind masters.

"There is a beautiful story told among us that has been handed down from parent to child for many generations. If you would care to hear it, I will repeat it to you now."

Blaze and Smiler both assured her ladyship that they should be delighted. But Smiler, as he whisked his huge and glossy flanks with his tail, said to himself that if any horse had ever been born, Arab or any other sort, that could have beaten *him* at an honest day's work, when he was in his prime, then he was "a Dutchman!"

"It happened," said Lady Zara, "many years ago, when the Bedouin Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, as I have heard tell, got their living mostly by plundering other people. This was very wrong, of course, but I need not say that the horses, though used in these thieving expeditions, were in no way to blame for them.

"A certain tribe of these wild Arabs had attacked in the desert a richly-laden caravan from the city of Damascus, and gained a complete victory. They imagined themselves safe from punishment, and were busily leading away the camels with all the stolen goods, when they were suddenly dropped down upon by a troop of horsemen.

"Those came from the Turkish pasha, who, knowing a caravan was expected, had sent to meet it, and escort it in safety to the end of the journey. They, in their turn, fell upon the Arabs, killing many and taking the remainder prisoners. Among

these was the Arab chief, who, being only slightly wounded, was bound upon a camel, while his beautiful mare was taken possession of to be given as a present to the pasha.

"When night came, as they had not reached their destination, prisoners and captors alike encamped in the open air. The Arab chief, with his legs strapped together and his arms bound behind him, lay near the tents where the Turks slept, but the pain of his wound kept him wide awake. The horses were fastened round about the tents.

"More than once, during that long night, the wounded chief heard the voice of his beloved mare neighing for him among the strangers with whom she had been placed. She had been his dear faithful companion for years, and he loved her almost as if she had been a human sister. He felt he must speak to her and comfort her once again, before they were for ever parted.

"Slowly and painfully, he crawled over the ground to where the horses were tied, and at last reached his poor friend. 'What wilt thou do among the Turks?' he said. 'Thou wilt no longer be able to bound through the desert, free as the wind of heaven; thou wilt be shut up in the vaults of a Khan. No more will the women and children bring thee sweet camel's milk and barley. No more wilt thou cleave with thy white breast the cool waters of Jordan. But I—I shall be worse off than thou, for I must end my days as a miserable slave. Go! Return to the tent thou knowest so well. Push thy

head through the curtains, and lick the hands of my children, and tell my wife that I shall return to her no more.'

"Then, tearing desperately with his teeth at the cord by which the mare was tethered, the chief succeeded, after a time, in biting it through, and setting her free. But, instead of making a leap for liberty, the loving creature bent her head and smelt her master all over. Then, realising that he was helpless, and unable to mount upon her back as of yore, she seized in her teeth the leather belt round his waist, and started off at a gallop in the direction of their home.

"Many a mile did the gallant beast thus carry her master, and when at length she laid him in safety at the door of his tent, she dropped to the ground, and died of fatigue. But her memory will never die. The whole tribe mourned her; poets have sung her praises; and the story of her love and courage is told among the Arabs of the desert, with glory and pride, even to this very day."

"Not many of that sort about," remarked Blaze, with his mouth full of grass. The Arab lady had become so carried away with this romantic tale of one of her own kindred, that she stood with head erect, her great black eyes sparkling, her delicate nostrils distended as if she even then sniffed the free air of the boundless desert. Blaze's commonplace tone, however, brought her to herself again."

"We all have it in us," she said with a gentle

sigh, "but circumstances rarely happen to give us a chance of heroism. I think I may say, without self-praise, that I would have done anything in the world for my dear master. Though an Englishman, he had as fine a sympathy with his horse as any Arab. He never raved or shouted at me. He would lean over my neck, and *whisper* his commands in my ear. Perhaps he had learned from the Bedouin who was my first owner, that horses love to be whispered to; it seems to act upon them like a sort of charm.

"My master was a doctor," continued Lady Zara, "and he often had to ride long distances at night over a wild and hilly country to attend patients who needed him. Then it was that I was happy and proud to know that my natural gift for finding my way in the dark, and for instinctively feeling when we were on dangerous ground, was of real value to him.

"On one occasion, he was summoned in the night to give extra help at a hospital which was not far from a battlefield—for the greater part of my life has been lived with my master in foreign countries—and a thick fog came down upon our road when we were not more than half-way to our destination. Neither my master nor I could see a yard before us. I felt that his safety depended entirely upon me, and, as the way was a most dangerous one, along rough and narrow mountain paths, where we needed to pick our steps carefully even by daylight, you can imagine what it must have been at night, and in a fog!"

Blaze trembled, and nearly shied at the very thought, but Smiler, not being gifted with much imagination, went on stolidly cropping the daisies.

"I went very slowly," continued Zara, "trying the ground with a smart rap of my fore-hoof at every step, before I trusted our weight upon it. For a time we proceeded in safety. Then came a moment—I shall never forget it!—when, putting forward my hoof cautiously as usual, I trod upon nothing! With a cry of terror which I could not suppress, I came to an instant standstill, and my master felt me shudder all over.

"He knew at once that something was wrong, and, while I stood motionless as a statue, he took a box of fusees out of his pocket, and having struck a light, leaned over my neck to find out what was the matter.

"We were at the very end of a strip of rock that overhung an awful precipice! and so narrow was it that there was not even room for me to turn round. My master dismounted very carefully, and with his hand on my bridle slowly backed me, leaving me to feel each step with my hind feet as I had been doing with my front ones. How glad we both were to find ourselves once more on a broad stretch of ground, I can't express to you, but my dear master threw his arms round my neck, and called me 'his beauty' and 'his treasure,' and said my sagacity had saved his life. Soon after, the fog lifted a little, and we reached the hospital in safety."

"Those mountain roads wouldn't suit me," said Blaze. "A fog in Fleet Street is bad enough, but a fog with precipices all round you—ugh!"

"I simply couldn't climb a mountain!" said Smiler, who, fine powerful horse that he was, looked as ponderous as a young elephant.

"Well, you see, we each have our special gifts," replied the Arab modestly. "You are fitted for one sort of work, and I for another. It would never do for us all to be alike. I should be powerless in front of those immense loads that you draw along quite easily. But mountain-climbing is a common accomplishment of all our breed. My master often said that any one would think I had claws in my hoofs, like a cat, to see the way I would clamber up the face of a steep gorge. All he had to do was to sit tight, and give me my head, and away I would go, over the roughest rocks as lightly as an antelope, and with never a false step.

"Often his companions—when a party of them were together — would be mounted on ordinary horses, and would have to get down and walk, leaving their horses to stumble along, without riders, as best they could, often falling and hurting themselves; while I and my dear master skipped lightly from crag to crag, and soon gained the summit. How proud and pleased I felt, and how the others must have envied us!"

"As you have travelled a great deal," said Blaze, "besides having been born in a foreign land, perhaps you can tell us whether it is true

that there are really wild horses in some parts of the world, who never live in a stable, and have no owners."

"Oh, yes, that is quite true," said Lady Zara. "In the deserts of Arabia, near my native place, herds of most beautiful wild horses are occasionally found, as well as, even more abundantly, on the prairies of North America. My mother used to tell me about them. They are wonderfully intelligent creatures, and choose their own chief. Sometimes, in dry seasons, they are compelled to go a long way in search of water, and they march in orderly ranks, like a regiment of soldiers. The chief walks at the head of the column, which usually moves four abreast. It is he who first plunges into any river, or descends into any ravine they have to cross, and he is the first to venture into an unknown wood; the rest, inspired by his courage, follow willingly; or if they don't, they are bitten by the others till they become obedient.

"If they come across any strange-looking object, the chief goes on ahead to examine it, and when he comes back he tells them in horse-language whether they are to go quietly forward, or show fight, or beat a retreat. If a lion or a tiger comes upon them too quickly for them to escape, they put all the young ones in the middle, and form themselves into a dense mass all round. This is usually too much for the enemy to attack.

"Of course, the men of those parts are very anxious to possess themselves of these wild horses,

and have various clever ways of catching them. The lasso, which is a sort of long slip-noose, is about the most successful. The hunters often tame these horses, when caught, by tying them up, and leaving the poor beasts to the pains of hunger and thirst for a long time, which results in their becoming quickly attached to the person who first brings them food and drink. But I have also heard it said that if a hunter, when he secures a wild horse, can manage to take hold of its nostrils and forcibly breathe into them his own breath, the creature will follow him and become perfectly submissive at once.

"But, now, Mr. Smiler," said Lady Zara, "I think I've talked quite long enough. I am sure we should very much like to hear a few of your experiences."

"I've nothing romantic and interesting to tell, like your ladyship," replied Smiler. "I'm but a heavy matter-of-fact old fellow. But this I can say, I've a real good master, as well as you, and I will yield the palm to no one in my love for him. I've never had a really bad or cruel man for a master, I'm thankful to say, but there are a good many horse-owners who, although they would not brutally beat, or over-work, or starve a horse, yet treat him only like a sort of live machine, to be taken care of because it makes him work better and live longer, and so yield more value for his cost and keep."

"I know just what you mean," said Blaze. "A man of that sort will rub down his horse and his

bicycle in exactly the same way—merely to preserve his own property; and no more think of giving a kind word to the one than to the other."

"That's it! My first master was like that. I should as soon have expected him to stroke one of the wheels of his old hay-cart as to pat me. It's hard to do your best for a person like that. However, he woke up a bit before I left him.

"Did he, though! How was that?"

"Well, he had a little grandchild he was very fond of—a little rosy-cheeked, curly-headed thing that stood about as high as my knee. I was very fond of her too, for she had a good mother who taught her to be kind to all living creatures, and she would often give me a bit of bread or sugar out of her own hand. Dear me, such tiny fingers they were that held it. I was almost afraid of taking it for fear I might bite the little fingers.

"But I heard the mother say one day, 'I can always let Daisy feed Smiler. See how careful and gentle he is! He wouldn't hurt a fly.' I blushed all over with pleasure at that compliment, though no one would have guessed it to look at me; and I made up my mind always to deserve such kind praise.

"One summer evening, after my work was done, I was grazing in my master's meadow—one much like this, with a pond in it instead of a stream—and Daisy, with a boy cousin, was playing round about. All of a sudden I was startled by hearing

a heavy splash. Looking up from the grass, I saw Daisy's pink pinafore disappear under the surface of the pond, which, at one part, was rather deep. The little boy stood still for a minute, staring, and then ran screaming towards the house, which was some distance away.

"There seemed only one thing for me to do. I just stepped down to the water and waded in. Next time the pink pinafore came to the surface, I seized it in my teeth, and lifted the little girl out on to the grass. She was streaming and dripping, and terribly frightened, but not otherwise much the worse for her dip.

"But the fuss her friends made quite astonished me. They seemed to think I had done a very wonderful feat. They all came round me, patting me, and calling me a 'dear old thing'—(though I was quite young at that time!)—and a 'darling.' Even the old farmer stroked my nose, for the first time, and said 'Good horse! He's saved the little un's life!' And he never seemed quite indifferent to me again."

"I consider you showed great presence of mind," said Lady Zara. "An Arab could not have done better. I mean no offence, of course," she hastily added, "but one expects strength rather than intelligence from a cart-horse."

"I can assure your ladyship," rejoined Smiler with some dignity, "that the cart-horse is in no way inferior to other breeds in sagacity and affection, though, possibly, he does not so often enjoy the advantage of mixing with people who

take pains to educate him and bring all his talents out.

"But I must hurry on with my story, since you are kind enough to care to hear it. For the first two years of my life I, of course, did nothing but eat and grow. Then, for between three and four years, I worked for that old farmer I told you about. When I was six years old he sold me to a railway company to draw one of their parcels vans, and I went to London."

"Oh!" exclaimed Blaze, awakened by that magic word from a short nap. "That's the place to wear out your shoes."

"Yes, indeed, I soon found that out," said Smiler. "During the five years I worked that van I had, on an average, a new set of shoes, one or two at a time, as they were wanted, every four weeks. 'A shoe a week,' is what my driver used to say."

"Van-pulling must be terribly hard work," said Lady Zara.

"Not when you're young and strong," replied Smiler. "Work is a pleasure then, especially when you've a kind master, and a good stable to go to when the day is done. I had both. The company I was employed by had over a thousand horses working in the streets of London. In the huge stables that were my home, five hundred of us were lodged, and a lot more in another fine building close by. There was a hospital, too, belonging to the same company, where three dozen invalid horses could be well taken care of and



"In the evening he grows hungry."

cured of any hurts or ailments from which they happened to be suffering.

"Of course, being employed by a company is a very different thing from being one by yourself, and the pet of a whole family of kind people; it is different, too, from being one of a small number of horses kept by a private individual. It isn't so comfortable in some ways, but it's better than being owned by a man who is too stupid, or stingy, or selfish, to care properly for you. Railways, and carriers, and big contractors, do look after their animals, I can tell you.

"In our stables the different colours were kept separate, one stable being all grays, another all chestnuts, another all bays, and so on, for the proprietors knew that horses are quietest when with those of their own colour. I suppose we have all heard the joke about the costermonger's donkey who looked so miserable because he had been standing for a week between two hearse-horses, and couldn't get over the low spirits they had given him! But it is just the same the other way round. If a coloured horse is placed among the black ones, they at once become restless and fretful. So in this stable we were each kept with our own colour; and I have often heard visitors, who occasionally came to look over the place, exclaim how neat and orderly everything was, and how clean and well groomed were we.

"We each had our own comfortable stall, carpeted with fresh straw litter. Each horse's number, which was branded on to his hoof, was

also over his head, and his own harness, all but the collar, hung behind him. We didn't exactly have on a clean collar every morning, like tidy school-boys, but our collars were always taken away to the drying-room as soon as we got home every night, to be nicely aired, ready for next morning.

"The day's work would begin for some of us in the very small hours — two o'clock on Mondays, when the vans of Covent Garden market would go out. But those that had extra long hours one day, would have a day's rest the next. Some of our vans were the heaviest things going through the streets of London. A van and its load would often weigh over nine tons, and need four horses to draw it. These were never expected to go beyond a walking pace. The years I spent in the service of the railway company were hard-working years, certainly, but I was very happy.

"After I was considered too old for the company's work, I was sold to a private carrier. Nothing very remarkable happened to me while I was with him, except that I formed an interesting friendship with a stray dog."

"Tell us about it!" said Blaze. "Dogs and horses are often the best of friends. I suppose because they both admire man so much, and are so deeply attached to a good master."

"Well, this poor thing had had a very rough time of it," said Smiler. "He had been chased and stoned by cruel boys, and came limping into my stable for refuge, with one of his legs fractured,

and his poor little body covered with bruises. He let me smell him all over, and I soon found out what was the matter. Then when bedtime came, I let him lie on a soft place between my front feet, and he seemed very glad to stay there.

"My master let the stray dog live in my stable for some time, and we became great chums. When his leg got well, he would come out with us, riding in the van, and my master found him quite useful in taking care of the goods. He was very fond of me, and often jumped up to lick my nose, and in return I would scratch his back with my teeth, which seemed to please him very much."

"That dog ought to have been grateful to you," remarked Lady Zara.

"He was!" returned Smiler. "Did you ever hear of an ungrateful dog?—I never did. There's no creature alive—except, perhaps, ourselves—who appreciates kindness so much as a dog. And he more than repaid me. One day, I had been very poorly; in fact, I had got one of my legs badly hurt, and was lying in the meadow to rest and recover. Tyke was close beside me, but hidden by my body. In the course of the morning some boys came along—I think they must have been the same who had ill-used the dog, for I don't believe there can be many boys of that sort in the world—at least, I hope not; and seeing me lie there looking rather helpless, they seemed to think I should make a good target for stones.

"But you should have just seen Tyke go for them! He leaped over me like a flash, and

caught the leg of the nearest boy before the young rascal knew what he was about. I don't think Tyke really bit his flesh—at least, he assured me he didn't; but he tore his trousers, and sent him off yelling with fright. Those boys didn't come near *our* meadow again in a hurry, I can tell you. And I was left in peace."

"Was Tyke the best friend you ever had?" asked Blaze. "Barring a good master, I mean."

"The best animal friend, certainly," said Smiler. "But when I think of those who have helped me most, I always give a front place to the Little Giant."

"Who is that?" asked Lady Zara and Blaze together. "Never heard of him before."

"Another name he has is the 'Horses' Friend,' and he deserves it, for the strained limbs and useless blows he has saved us."

"He must be a good man," observed Blaze.

"He isn't a man," replied Smiler.

"Nor an animal, I think you said? What on earth is he then?"

"He's a jolly, little, puffing steam-engine," said Smiler. "I never could have believed, before I saw him, that I could have got downright fond of a steam-engine. But this good fellow spends all his time walking up and down the steep hills at Norwood, in London, dragging heavy vans, while the horses that belong to them trot gaily behind. He lives close to the Crystal Palace, and is always ready to lend a hand to any poor heavily-laden horse that comes along."

"Does he do it for nothing?"

"I've heard that a number of kind-hearted people join together to pay for his keep; but he isn't above accepting small donations of a penny or two from the carmen whose horses he helps, and he carries a box for that purpose. As far as I know, there is only one Little Giant in London; and as I frequently travelled to Norwood, I often had occasion to thank him for his help. But there are several other steep hills about, which try the horses dreadfully. I wish there was a Little Giant at each of them.

"Ah, me! life isn't easy, especially when you're getting into years. But it isn't without its bright spots. The Little Giant is one; and the Cart-horse Parade, that I hope to show up at next week, is another."

"So you are one of those smartly-decorated creatures one sees about town on a Whit Monday," said Blaze, with interest.

"Yes, and one of these days I hope to win a prize, if only for my master's sake. It has done a world of good to horses, getting their owners to take a pride in them. You should just see me when I'm dressed for the Parade. Blue and yellow ribbons to tie up my mane and tail, and garlands of pink paper roses about my head and neck. Pink roses suit my complexion A1; and then the brass plates on my harness shine like gold. It's a proud day for us horses, and for our kind masters too; and it's a fine sight we make, walking round in procession, in Regent's

Park, with crowds of ladies and gentlemen looking on and admiring us!"

"Indeed it must be," said Lady Zara; "and I heartily hope that this year you will get a prize."

"So do I," said Blaze, cordially, as the man was seen coming to lead them to their stalls. "All good luck to you, and good-night."

[The Author's thanks are due to "The Horse World of London" for several pieces of information about van and cab horses, of which use has been made.]

THE GRUNTING OX.

MOST of us have heard the good old riddle: "Why are horses little needed in the Isle of Wight?" and its answer: "Because most people prefer *Cowes* to *Ryde*." But possibly every one does not know that in the strange, far land of Thibet —the "forbidden land" to foreign travellers, the natives really do "prefer cows to ride."

The rough and shaggy, but gentle-looking creature in our picture, to whom its master is offering some grassy dainty, is the Yak, or Grunting Ox, an animal of the very greatest value to the Tartars, the Calmucks, and the inhabitants of some parts of China and India. In form, it is something like the buffalo and the Brahmin bull, having a hump upon its back, but it is covered with an immensely thick coat of long, woolly hair. This natural protection, which, like the covering of every animal living in cold climates, gets much heavier in winter time, keeps the yak so warm that it never needs the luxury of a house or shed, but can remain comfortably out of doors in the severest weather.

When the snow lies thick upon the mountain sides where it browses, so that all green herbage is buried, it will roll its huge body, over and over, down a slope, and having thus ploughed a channel in the snow, will turn round and work its way up it, eating the grass it has thus uncovered.

The thick hair of the yak also enables it to carry heavy loads on pack-saddles, without being galled by them. The saddles used for riding are most uncomfortable-looking things — just wooden frames, without any cushions or padding whatever; yet the people of Thibet and Tartary seem quite satisfied with both the beast and its harness, and use no other. The creatures show great intelligence in finding their way from place to place, though the road is not visible. If the traveller loses his way, all he has to do is to let the yaks go as they will, and, following them, he will be brought back to the track again.

They also have keen instinct for knowing whether or not a crust of frozen snow is strong enough to bear their weight. Travellers who are themselves in any doubt as to the safety of the ice, will drive a yak on ahead of them to test it. When the animals come to a river or a mountain torrent, they make no ado, but, without hesitation or urging, plunge in at once and swim to the other side.

When Mr. Savage Landor, whose daring adventures into the forbidden land of Thibet, and terrible sufferings there, made such a thrilling story,* was travelling once with two yaks laden with all his provisions and possessions, they came near the bank of a river, on the other side of which was a native encampment. Round about the tents of the men, their flocks and herds, consisting of hundreds of yaks and sheep, were grazing.

* "In the Forbidden Land." London: William Heinemann.

As soon as Mr. Landor's yaks caught sight of these relatives of theirs in the distance, they were seized with a violent desire to pay them a visit; or, perhaps, they thought that standing about munching the green grass at one's leisure was pleasanter work than trudging along the road under a heavily laden pack-saddle. However that may be, they straightway bolted, and plunged into the river, carrying all the property with them.

Mr. Landor's servant threw stones at them to make them turn back, but this proved to be a mistake, as it only made them swim the faster. But the river was deeper and the current swifter than the yaks, in their eagerness to get to the encampment, had bargained for, and they both sank under the weight of their burdens.

When they came to the surface again, it was only to float helplessly with the tide.

Mr. Landor was in great distress at this accident, for, while one of the animals was carrying all his money, food, clothing, and other necessaries, its companion was laden with the water-tight cases containing his precious scientific instruments, notes, sketches, and maps, which, if lost, no money in the world could ever replace. Imagine his feelings to see these priceless packages drifting farther and farther out of his reach on the bodies of the drowning yaks.

He and his companion ran along the side of the river, shouting to the animals in the hope of urging them to redouble their efforts to reach the other side; but when in mid-stream, the yaks

collided with one another, and the bump caused the pack-saddle and load of the smaller one, which was carrying the provisions, etc., to turn completely over, and sink the poor brute under the water.

Mr. Landor at once pulled off his clothes, and jumped into the river. He swam out to the yak, caught him by the horns, and saved him; but the ropes which bound the luggage to the creature's back had broken, and the packages of tinned food, the bundles of clothes, and all the traveller's money, were sunk deep into the soft mud at the bottom of the stream.

The other yak, however, was got safely to land, and as the precious instruments and books were saved, Mr. Landor did not grieve so much about the less important things.

The yak is the chief wealth of the inhabitants of Tartary. It gives, with comparatively little care and attention, quantities of rich milk. The women make this into excellent cheese and butter, which will keep sweet and good for a long time. When a sufficient quantity of this produce has accumulated, the yaks are laden with it and driven to market.

The skin makes durable clothing for the men, while the women spin and weave the long hair into woollen cloth that is useful for tents. They also make ropes of the hair, and it is sometimes woven into a coarse worsted lace, very silky in appearance, which, under the name of "yak lace," was fashionable in London some years ago, for trimming ladies' mantles and capes.

The tail of the yak is its most remarkable feature. It is very full, and composed of long, coarse, but glossy hair, generally white. This bunch of hair, commonly called a "horse-tail," but known in India as a "chowry," is mounted upon a handsomely decorated handle of ivory, silver, or even gold, and used as a standard by Persians and Turks.

There used to be in their armies three grades of officers, called pashas, or "bashaws," answering to our three grades of generals and admirals, whose respective ranks were shown by the number of yak tails they were allowed to have carried before them as banners. The one who had *three* was the highest, and so the term "a three-tailed bashaw," which we sometimes hear used to this day, means some one who is, or who would like to be thought, a very great and grand personage indeed.

The "chowries" used in India are generally dyed crimson, and they are carried in most state processions to add beauty and grace to the scene, and waved about to keep off the flies. Some elephants are taught to carry and wave the "chowry" for themselves, holding it with the tip of their trunk.

In Thibet, the yak is sometimes put to death with strange rites as a religious sacrifice.

At the death of a tribesman, a yak is taken, and dressed up in the clothes of the dead man—or, at least, covered with them—when the dead man's spirit is supposed to enter into the animal. The creature is then feasted upon all kinds of

good things, until it can eat no more; it is also given wine and spirits to drink until it is intoxicated and quite stupid.

All the relatives of the person who died then make a great fuss with the yak, and cry over it, treating it exactly as if it were the dead man himself. Then they strip the garments off it again, and say "Now, go! We have fed you and feasted you, and done all that we can for you; now we can do nothing more."

So the poor dazed and drunken animal is driven away, and, because it is against the rules of the Thibetan religion to draw blood from a yak, and yet they want to kill it, the mourners drive it higher and higher up the mountain path, till they come to the brow of a steep precipice. They then urge the yak to jump over the edge, and it is instantly killed by its fall into the valley.

Crowds of people are waiting to seize the carcase, which they cut up, and share among themselves; and thus these strange funeral rites wind up with a feast.

THE NUT-GATHERERS.

"GOOD-MORNING, cousin!" said a bushy-tailed squirrel to her little relative, the ground-squirrel, whom she espied on a lower branch of her own particular beech-tree. "One doesn't often meet you so far from the earth as this."

"I've had such a scare just now, I hardly know where I am," replied Brownie. "A huge monster, which I believe is called a boy, has been lurking round my home for the last half-hour. I know he wants to catch me, and eat me up, so I watched my opportunity to slip out and rush up this tree. I don't think, though he has been known to climb sometimes, that he can get me here."

"I should hope not!" said Bush-tail, "for my nest is in that fork of the branch up above, there. But I don't really believe the boy wanted *you*. You are not reckoned good food in this country, and you are not handsome enough for a pet. If it were *me*, now!"—and she curled her beautiful tail over her back, and sat down under its shade with as much pride as if it had been an umbrella of state.

"Many of us," she went on, "are caught every year, and dosed with nasty stuff they call laudanum, which makes us so sleepy and stupid that we appear quite tame, so we are easily put in cages and sold. The laudanum often makes us so ill that we shortly die; but if we get over the effects of it, we are generally doomed to live in

prison, with nothing to do but work a treadmill all day."

"Really, how dreadful!" exclaimed Brownie, who, having lived in a burrow all her life, did not know much of the world. "If that is what comes of having a fine tail, I would rather be without it. But why those savage creatures, boys and men, are allowed to prowl about at large, as they do, frightening respectable and inoffensive people out of their senses, I can't imagine. My heart hasn't left off palpitating yet! They really ought to be put down!"

"Most of them are very savage, I'm afraid," said Bush-tail; "but a brother of mine called Hazel, who has lived with a man for some time, and often comes home to see his friends, gives that one man quite a good character."

"Do you mean to say that, although he has been taken prisoner, he is allowed his liberty?" asked Brownie, in great surprise. "Once free, I should have thought he would never let himself be caught again. I know I wouldn't!"

"Ah, but he is very much attached to his master. The man is so kind that Hazel would not leave him for the world. He was taken from the nest when quite a baby, and fed on biscuits, or bread, soaked in sweet milk, with plenty of nuts, and generally a lump of sugar between meals. He was not kept in a cage, except now and then, but used to lie on the table near his master, while the man read or wrote.

"Everyone in the house was so gentle to little

Hazel that, though naturally as shy and timid as the rest of us, he lost all fear, and became as playful as a kitten. He tells us what fine games he has with his master, nibbling his fingers, or licking his hair; he has even learned to jump over a stick, like a dog, and says it is fine fun, for he always gets rewarded with a lump of sugar, if he does it well."

"What a strange life!" said Brownie. "And he actually pretends to like it."

"He does like it, or he would not go back, when he has so many chances to escape," said Bush-tail. "His master often brings him to the woods in his pocket, and then lets him out for a scamper. Hazel does enjoy it so! Up the trees he goes, like a flash, with his tail waving and his eyes sparkling like the best of us. Yet he is always willing to return to that snug coat-pocket, and be carried to the home where he is so happy."

"Well," rejoined Brownie, "I have never heard of any of our branch of the family being tamed, however delightful your friend may have found it. It's not natural, and I must say I don't hold with it."

"Excuse me, cousin," said Bush-tail, who did not wish to argue the point, "but aren't you suffering from a swelled face to-day? I do hope you haven't got the toothache!"

"Dear me, no!" cried Brownie, laughing. "Do you mean to say that with all your knowledge you don't know that we ground-squirrels have bags in both our cheeks to carry nuts in? I'm now busy

laying in stores for the winter. I have a nice convenient home which I dug out for myself in the earthy bank on the other side of the stream. It is entered by a winding passage, and has two or three spare rooms at the sides to store my winter food in. I believe in putting by for a rainy day, or, at least, for a snowy and frosty day, when food will be scarce."

"Oh, so do I!" agreed the tree-squirrel; "I have nuts laid up in all sorts of places. I find that to bury them in the earth is as good a plan as any."

"But don't you ever forget where you have put them?"

"Oh, now and then, of course. But it doesn't much matter if I do, for I always take care to gather many more than I shall need. And sometimes those buried nuts take root, and grow into trees, so it is doing good in the world, anyway. There is a story in our family of a great-great-great—about twenty times great—uncle of mine, who once made a storehouse of the hole in the middle of an old, disused millstone. Either he didn't need to eat his nuts or he forgot to look for them, but anyhow, one of the kernels took root in the ground, and shot up its stem through the hole in the stone, and grew into a fine tree, which has been yielding crops of beautiful nuts these many years.

"Indeed, I could point to several trees which have been planted by squirrels. So, you see, if we do lose a few of the nuts and acorns we gather and hide, it is for the good of the race. But,



B.O.W.

Lady Zara, the white Arab mare.

really, dear cousin, I think I must say 'good-bye' and hurry on with my work. The cold weather will be coming soon now, and my winter house is not half ready."

"You are quite grand, with your summer house, and your winter house!" said Brownie, cramming another nut into her right cheek as she spoke.

"It isn't a question of grandeur, my dear cousin, but convenience," said Bush-tail. "My summer residence, as you know, is perched high among the branches, and hidden by the leaves. It is beautifully comfortable, and in a lovely, airy position, and here I have brought up a most promising family of five children. But it is not warm enough for the cold weather, as then we sleep a great deal of our time, and it is impossible to sleep well if you are not warm enough in bed. I have found a splendid place, a snug hollow between the forking branches of an old tree near here, and when it is well lined and furnished with plenty of dry leaves, grass, and moss, it will be as cosy as any one can possibly wish."

"That sounds very nice, indeed!" said Brownie. "But is it true, as I have been told, that you are in danger of being turned out by a horrid thing—a lean, long, creeping, crawling, sly beast——"

"You mean the marten!" cried the tree-squirrel. "He is indeed our greatest enemy. A shocking affair happened in the oak-tree yonder, only last spring. A sister of mine had prepared and furnished as sweet a little home as you could wish to see, well protected from rain and sun, roomy and soft and

warm. But, my dear cousin, the very first night she moved in, a marten broke into the house, murdered my poor sister, sucked her blood, and took possession of her pretty nest! Isn't it horrible to think of?

"And there the creature brought up her own family of three young ones, teaching them from their infancy to devour live birds and enjoy stolen eggs; and when they are old enough, I suppose, they will go on committing burglaries and murders, and robbing poor birds and squirrels for the living they are too lazy to earn by honest work. It is dreadful to think of children being so viciously trained; but the martens are a bad lot—very bad indeed."

"I saw a marten and her young ones being persecuted by quite a crowd of small birds, the other day," said Brownie. "They were flying round and round, chirping and chattering, and calling her every name they could think of. I was rather surprised at their rudeness, but now I can quite understand it. By the way, Cousin Bush-tail," she continued, "you get about the world so much more than I do, and hear and learn so many things, can you tell me whether it is true, as I have been told, that some of our relatives are able to fly? It seems so wonderful, I can hardly believe it."

"It doesn't seem so very wonderful to me!" replied Bush-tail. "Why, I can very nearly fly myself. Just watch me now!"

She darted away as she spoke, to the very top of the tree, her little hands with their sharp-clawed

fingers helping her—a mere brown flash, she seemed, ascending the green-gray trunk. Then, with her furry tail spread and streaming behind her to its full length, she took an immense leap from that tree-top to another some distance away; down that she darted, scampered over the ground, and up again to where Brownie sat, before the other had time to realise where she had gone.

"There!" she said, triumphantly, as she settled down once more with her tail gracefully curved over her back, and began to nibble at a chestnut she held in her two hands. "If I had wings I couldn't do much better than that. But, all the same, I believe it is true that in distant parts of the world there are members of our family whose coats are made extra full all down the sides—cloaks, you might almost call them—so that they spread out, sail-fashion, between their front and back paws when they take a leap, and that helps them to go farther, without touching a branch, than even I can.

"But I do not envy them. If only I can get my house finished and my bed made before the cold weather comes, and can keep safe from that horrid marten, I am quite content; and a happier, merrier creature you won't meet with in a day's march."

RONALD AND THE RED DEER.

CHAPTER I.

A HOME IN PORLOCK VALE.

WHEN Ronald Darnton told Mr. Blake, his schoolmaster, that he would not be coming back to school after the summer holidays, Mr. Blake was truly sorry to hear it. Ronnie was a likeable boy, honest, truthful, and kindly, and his influence in the fourth form was entirely good. He was also a sufficiently intelligent and interested scholar to be a real help to any master in whose class he happened to be; and the value of such pupils, whether boys or girls, to their teachers, is very great.

"Are you going right out of town?" asked Mr. Blake, "or only removing to another part of London?"

"We're going to Porlock, in Somersetshire," said Ronald. "It's a seaside place, somewhere between Minehead and Lynton. We're going for my sister Katie's sake," he added. "She is rather delicate, and the doctor says London doesn't suit her; she ought to be in a sheltered place, with sea air."

"I see!" said Mr. Blake. "So you've settled upon Porlock Vale, a sweet place—the Vale of Flowers, I call it, for I've been there. It is shut in by hills on three sides, while the fourth is open to the sea."

"That sounds jolly!" said Ronald. "I don't know that we should have settled on going there, only an old friend of my mother's, who has a cottage there, is going to let her have it rent-free for a year. And that's a fine thing for us, because we're not over-rich!"

"I see!" said Mr. Blake again, this time with a kindly smile. "Well, I congratulate you, Darnton, though I'm sorry to lose you. You are going into a beautiful and romantic country, and full of historic interest. It's the 'Lorna Doone' country, you know, and on the borders of Exmoor, the last home in England of the wild red deer."

"Deer!" exclaimed Ronald. "Do they really live wild on Exmoor still? Do you think we shall ever see any?"

"Oh, yes! When I was staying in a village not many miles from Lynton one summer some years ago, I remember, we often in the woods, or on the heights, caught sight of one of those pretty creatures. There are frequent stag-hunts there, you know, in the season."

"I hate the thought of hunting," said Ronnie. "It seems so horrid and cruel. And the deer are so gentle and beautiful, I don't know how anybody can like it!"

"The farmers, I believe, excuse themselves on the ground that the deer come and eat their corn," said Mr. Blake. "But I suspect it is the excitement and pleasure people find in the chase that makes them so eager for it, far more than any real need for killing the animals. I am one with you

there, Darnton, and with the poet Wordsworth, when he tells us—

> 'Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.'"

Ronald was highly delighted at the thought that they were going to live near "the last home of the wild red deer." The phrase itself had a romantic, old-world sound about it, as though one might also come across a glimpse of Bold Robin Hood and his merry men, all dressed in forester's green; it even conjured up visions of the red-haired king whose breast received the arrow meant for the wild deer.

"I wonder the people living near Exmoor don't catch the stags and tame them, and get them to draw carriages," said Ronnie. "That would be ever so much better than hunting them to death with fierce dogs. Fancy how handsome a carriage and pair of stags with fine, branching horns would be! Why hasn't anybody ever thought of it? Think of the speed they could go at, too!"

"Ever so much better than nasty, ugly motor-cars," said Kate. "But I suppose deer never could be broken to such work."

"Why not? They are in Lapland," her brother reminded her. "The reindeer, which are not so very different from ours, only larger, always draw the sledges there. Oh, mustn't a sledge drive be just lovely! I was reading about it the other day. Fancy flying along over the frozen snow, sparkling like diamonds in the starlight, with the sleigh-bells all ringing, and the beautiful coloured lights of

the *aurora borealis* flashing away in the north like a blaze of fireworks! I say, though, that must be A1—just!"

"You might like a taste of it once in a way for a treat," said his sister, who was fifteen, "but you'd grumble like anything at a winter's night six months long, sledge-drives notwithstanding. And I think the reindeer must be very unlike ours in many ways. For one thing, they must be much stronger. I know I've seen somewhere that a reindeer once carried an official with important state documents in his care eight hundred miles in forty-eight hours—just think of it!"

"Oh, I know that story," said Ronald; "and the poor thing dropped dead the moment it arrived, which was a sad pity, as it ought to have lived and been made no end of a fuss with, for its wonderful feat."

"I do hope we shall see some real deer, with horns, at Porlock," said Katie. "They must look so handsome."

"Mr. Blake thinks we shall, almost certainly," said Ronald. "He did, when he was staying somewhere near there in his holidays one year. It was not so long ago, either; I think it must have been the summer before last, for I remember his telling us about it when he came back. He gave us quite a long talk one day on the strange way those fine-looking antlers grow. They lose them every year, you know, and grow fresh ones."

"Do they really?" said Katie. "I didn't know

that. How fast they must grow. Just like a little tree, or a thing grown from seed, I should think."

"They come bigger every year, until they are what you may call 'grown up,' and every year have more branches. I remember how plain Mr. Blake made it about the wonderful way these horns are fed, while they are growing. They are covered all over with a living, velvety skin, full of blood-vessels; but as soon as they have grown as big as they are going to, this skin dries up, and shrivels, and peels off, and I suppose it fidgets the stag, for he rubs his antlers against the bark of trees to get rid of it. And when it is all gone, there is the bare horn, strong, and hard, and white."

"And how do they get rid of them, when they want to grow fresh ones?" asked Kate.

"It seems that the whole antler loosens from the root, and drops off, like an old tooth."

"Then I should think if you walked in the woods and places where the deer live, you might find their old horns lying about," said Kate.

"I dare say you might," said Ronald. "But unless you had a fine entrance hall, like that at the Towers, and wanted to hang them about for ornament, they wouldn't be worth picking up."

"Oh, wouldn't they, though!" rejoined Kate. "You forget what a number of things are made of horn—cups, and combs, and shoe-lifts, and knife-handles — why, don't you know that fine pocket-knife of Uncle Harry's, that has a stag-horn handle?"

"Oh, ah!" said Ronnie. "I forgot. Well, as we are going to be such near neighbours of the deer, I vote we find out all we can about him, and then, when we meet, we shan't feel so much like strangers!"

CHAPTER II.

A WALK AND A TALK.

WHEN Ronald and Kate, with their mother, first arrived at Porlock, the children were nearly wild with delight at the pretty village, and its beautiful surroundings. Most of its quaint, thatched cottages were simply bowered in creepers. And the flowers! —they were everywhere. Jasmine, clematis, and starry passion-flowers were climbing every roof, and peeping in at every window, and leaning over every garden gate, with geraniums, hydrangeas, tall hollyhocks, huge bushes of scarlet-drooping fuchsias, and brilliant bunches of white and crimson phlox; while the garden-beds were overflowing with calceolarias, dahlias, pinks, and gorgeous begonias of many hues, all struggling for room to lift their luxuriant blooms to the sun and air.

"But the *roses!*" cried Kate, as the omnibus from Minehead plunged down the steep road, and clattered into the village. "Do look, mother! Did ever you see such roses before? There are crimson and cream colour, and yellow, all growing on one house, and the *loveliest* pink ones on the one next to it. Are there any roses on the house where

we are going to live? Oh, Ron, we're stopping! Is it *here?* Oh, Ronnie, it's the house with the pink roses!—Isn't that too beautiful for anything?"

To this London-bred child, it seemed glorious beyond belief to live in a house where sweet blush roses hung all about the porch, dropping perfumed kisses on you as you went out or in. And then the real old-fashioned diamond-paned windows—and the view on one side of purple and gold hills, and on the other of a crescent of purple-gray beach, and green-gray sea in the distance.

Katie's pale cheeks were as pink as the roses with joy and excitement. "It's just like living in a picture!" she said. "It's like a fairy-tale! I can hardly believe it is true."

The first night Katie could scarcely sleep at all for delight. Lying awake in the early hours of the morning, she heard a wild, weird cry somewhere out of doors, like no sound she had ever heard before. It made her feel a wee bit "creepy," and she pulled the bedclothes over her head. Were there ill as well as good things in this enchanted land, and was that part of the fairy-tale?

In the morning she told her mother, and they asked the village woman who was to come in every day to do the rough housework, whether she ever heard strange noises in the night. And from what she told them they were sure that Katie had heard the voice of a wandering deer.

So, instead of feeling nervous the next night, Katie listened, in the hope of hearing the deer again, and listening she fell asleep. After that, the

beautiful fresh air made her sleep so soundly every night that she knew nothing from the moment she laid her head on the pillow until she woke up in the broad daylight.

Ronald was most anxious to get down to the shore.

"It seems a funny sort of beach," he said. "We can see it from ever so many places, but nobody ever seems to be walking on it, and there isn't a single bathing-machine or tent to be seen."

"Let's go and see what it's like," said Katie. "It can't be more than a quarter of a mile away."

"I'm afraid it's farther than you think," said Mrs. Darnton. "Don't go too far, Katie dear. Ronnie, I trust your sister to you. See that she doesn't get overtired."

"Right, mother!" said Ronnie. "I guess we shall get there, and have a good sit down, and be back again inside an hour."

They started off down a lane that seemed to lead straight to the sea—and they had been told that it did so—and at the end of the lane they skirted a corn-field, and after the corn-field they crossed a broad meadow where Katie was frightened nearly out of her wits by a wildly-galloping horse. Then, after considerable persuasion, Ronald got her through another meadow where they were stared at terribly hard by about twenty big-eyed cows. After this, they crossed another meadow and had to climb over an iron railing, and along a path which ended in a difficult stile.

"We must be quite close to the sea now," said Katie, sitting down on the stile, rather breathless.

"You sit and rest a bit," said Ronald. "I'll go and have a look round."

Soon he came back.

"Can you see the sea?" asked Katie.

"Yes, I can *see* it," answered the boy; "but it doesn't look much nearer than it did at first."

"Oh, but it must be!" said Katie. "We've come exactly the way the village people told us."

So they went on again; and their next difficulty was a ditch, which had to be crossed by a plank that trembled dreadfully. Katie trembled too, but Ronnie went over first, and made his hand very strong for her to hold by. After that, he had to hoist her over a stone wall—it came right in their path, there was no other way—then they traversed another meadow, and scaled a five-barred gate, this time being rewarded by another glimpse of the sea—as far off as ever!

"We're still going towards it, though," said Katie, whose spirit was beyond her strength. "So we can't have come wrong."

More fields, more stiles, more gates; then they arrived at a stream, which had to be crossed by stepping-stones that seemed to be placed twice as far apart as they should have been. Notwithstanding Ronald's help, Katie slipped off one of these, hurting her ankle, and wetting her foot; but still she bore up.

"We mustn't turn back now, Ronnie," she said; "we must be close to the beach now!"

But when, having crossed the meadow-land on the farther side of the stream, the venturesome pair found themselves faced by a high ridge of boulders, the girl's courage gave way.

She sat down at the foot of the forbidding-looking slope, and burst into tears.

"I *can't* climb up over those horrid stones!" she said. "I'm *so* tired! Oh, Ronnie, what shall we do?"

Ronnie pulled a very rueful face.

"I s'pose we oughtn't to have come so far," he said. "We have to get home, somehow."

"I'll rest a bit," said Katie, wiping her eyes, for she hated to be a drag on her brother, "and then we'll turn back. I don't believe there is any sea, after all. It's only painted stuff, like the hills round a scenic railway. If it was real, we must have come to it before now."

"Well, if it wasn't, we should have hit our noses up against the wood-work, shouldn't we?" said Ronald. "I believe the sea is just behind that ridge of stones."

"Oh, don't!" begged Katie, "I can't go an inch farther *that* way. I'm rested now. Let's turn back."

For a few minutes the pair trudged along bravely, but soon Katie's hurt foot began to pain her so much that she had to stop every few yards to ease it. She tried not to cry, but Ronald saw the tears running down her cheeks.

"Whatever shall we do?" he said. "It's getting late. Mother will wonder what has become of us. How I wish we had not come."

"It's my fault," said Katie. "I ought to have given up before. But I kept thinking that we were nearly there. Let's get into the road, Ronnie. It's just over there. I saw a horse go by, between the trees. It will be easier walking, and we might even get a lift in something."

Leaning on her brother, Katie managed to hobble to a gate that opened into a road which, as it led away from the sea, must, they thought, take them in the right direction for home.

They had not gone far, resting at every few yards, when they heard behind them the welcome sound of wheels and hoofs, and soon a light cart came in sight.

Ronnie stepped forward, and the driver, seeing that the boy wanted to speak, drew up.

"Will this take us into Porlock, please?" he asked.

"Yes. If you go to the end of this road and bear round to the right."

"Is it far?"

"About three miles."

"Oh, dear!" said Ronnie. "And my sister is so lame. She's hurt her foot."

"Is that her?" asked the man, pointing with his whip to the weary-looking figure sitting upon the grassy bank, a short distance ahead.

"Yes," said Ronnie. "We live in Porlock and want to get home."

"Jump up, then, both of you," said the kindly man. "I'm going through to Porlock Weir, and I can drop you on the way."

Very gratefully the children climbed up beside this friend in need, and behind a fat brown pony were soon jogging comfortably towards mother and tea.

Ronald, who was a great talker, lost no time in telling the owner of the cart who they were, and where they came from, and how it was they had wandered so far out of their way.

"Folks don't go down to the beach much," said the man. (Ronald found out, by the name painted upon the cart, that he was a Mr. Brown.) "It's too rough. You can't walk on those boulders, nor bathe neither. If you're from London," he added, "and you've never been in these parts before, you'll have a grand sight to-morrow. It's the first meet of the stag-hounds. You'll see them all go through the village."

"Is there going to be a hunt, then?" asked Ronnie.

"Yes."

"Oh!" said Katie. "I'm afraid I don't want to see them. They will be going to chase the beautiful deer."

"Why, you're as bad as my little boy," said Mr. Brown, "though, poor little chap, he can't see them, because he's blind. But when he hears the horses and dogs go past, he covers up his ears. He had a pet fawn once, the prettiest creature you ever saw, and he's always afraid that that will be the one they'll kill."

"What a sweet pet it must have been," said Katie.

"Yes, fawns are gentle creatures. It used to follow our Willie about the house, and eat out of his hand like a little dog. The mother must have met with some accident and left it, for it was picked up in the woods for dead—a little wee thing only a few days old. And it was given to Willie, for him to nurse up—and a fine handsome beast it grew. And then we had to let it go free, for like all wild things it could not be happy shut up; but our Willie nearly broke his heart over it."

"But stags are tamed sometimes, aren't they?" asked Ronnie. "I read of one once that was brought up with a lot of race-horses, and was tremendously fond of them, and used to run by their side every morning, when they were taken out to gallop."

"That was the sort they call fallow deer, most likely," said Mr. Brown. "It is a much smaller animal than our wild red deer. It is the fallow deer that is mostly kept for ornament in gentlemen's parks. But you should come and talk to our Willie about it all: he's got it at his finger ends, as you may say, in more ways than one, for he reads with his fingers from books with raised letters. And ever since he had Daisy—that's what he called the fawn—he's been keen on picking up every bit of knowledge he could get about the deer. I was in North America for some years—'way back before he was born—and he gets me to tell him over and over all I can remember about the moose."



"They love to feed and tend their young."

"What is the moose?" asked Ronnie.

"A kind of deer. Some call it the elk. It is a big animal, and looks rather fierce, but, in reality, I believe it is more easy to tame than any other beast of the deer kind. I remember hearing of one, when I was over there, which had been kept in a gentleman's stable-yard, and fretted so when he happened to go away for a time that the folks who kept it thought it would have died. Then, when it heard his voice once more, it knew it in a minute, and seemed nearly wild with joy. Ah, we little think, many of us, what precious bits of love the Almighty has put in His dumb creatures' hearts for us, if we only knew how to draw it out. . . . Look there, now! Look over there!"

Mr. Brown's tone changed suddenly from thoughtfulness to eager excitement, and he pointed to one of the fir-clad hills that rose to the left of the road along which they were driving. "There's a sight for you, now!"

The children's eyes strained in the direction their friend indicated, and there, flitting along the brow of the steep, were three graceful shapes, plainly visible in their tawny-reddish colour against the background of deep green,—a noble stag, with spreading antlers, his slender doe, and a lovely mottled fawn running at their side.

"There now!" said Mr. Brown. "Don't know as ever I've seen such a thing as that myself—not all of 'em together—and I've lived hereabouts these ten years. You're in luck's way, you youngsters!"

"Oh, wasn't it perfectly *sweet* to see them!" cried Katie. "Oh, I am so glad—the dear things! Father, mother, and baby! Oh, I am so glad we were here!"

"Willie'll like to hear about that," said Mr. Brown. "He'll think the doe was his Daisy, for certain. . . . Well, I was talking about the moose-deer, wasn't I?" he continued, as he turned and plunged down the steep bit of road into the village. "There's one very funny thing about him. His body's so short and his legs are so long, that when he goes at full speed he has to be very careful he doesn't tumble over his own toes. And sometimes he *does*, and comes a cropper."

"Why, how's that?" asked Ronnie, laughing.

"Well, it seems as if there's hardly room for his foreheels to get out of the way, before the hind feet come along and tread upon them. But he generally contrives to avoid this by straddling. Then his horns, too, get in the way of the branches of trees—they are not like the red deer horns, but flattened out, like great hands—but these he escapes by raising his head enough to make his horns lie back on his shoulders. Then his hoofs, which are very much divided, keep spreading open and shutting up with a sharp snap, as he runs, which makes a great clattering. He takes immense strides, with those long legs of his, and if he is angry, the hair on his neck bristles up like the mane of a lion."

"That sounds fierce enough," said Ronnie; "and yet you say the moose is so gentle."

"I said he could be easily tamed, and he is really very much afraid of man, and runs away from him. But any creature is likely to turn in anger, if it's being hunted to the death; and small blame to it, I say. If the moose does turn in a rage, the hunter had better get round a tree, double quick. A man I knew stood behind a big tree and heard a furious moose which he had pursued completely strip the bark from the other side by striking it with his fore-feet."

"Oh-h-h! I say! He must have felt comfy!" said Ronald.

"Then there is another kind of deer in North America, called the wapiti," resumed Mr. Brown. "These are often hunted by the Indians for the sake of their skin, which, when it has been well rubbed with the fat and brains of the animal itself, is very soft and flexible, and neither damp nor dryness injures it. These wapitis are terrible fighters among themselves, and this quarrelsomeness often leads them to a sad end, for they will drive at one another with their branching horns until these become entangled, and so firmly fixed that, unless they are loose and come off, or break, the two animals can never separate themselves, but die of hunger, or become a prey to wild beasts."

"The reindeer has the best fur of all, hasn't it?" asked Katie.

"Yes, I suppose it has," agreed Mr. Brown. "It is so thick that in no part can it be separated so as to show the skin. Dressed in clothes made

of this beautiful fur the Laplander need not fear any amount of frost or cold, especially if provided with some other soft and rich fur lining."

"If a Laplander has a reindeer, he wants nothing else, does he?" said Ronald. "I mean, it gives him food and clothes too."

"If he has a good herd of them, he is all right," said Mr. Brown, laughing. "He needs about a thousand to be a really rich man. Then from their milk, which is sweeter than cow's milk, though thinner, he gets cheese to put by for the winter, while the whey that is left gives him food during the summer. The flesh is dried and smoked to preserve it. The tongues are dried also and sold, being considered a great delicacy. Glue is obtained from the horns, and strong thread, like catgut, from the sinews. Snow-shoes are made from the skin that covers the animal's head and feet, so, whether living or dead, the reindeer is the Laplander's greatest wealth."

"What do they eat," asked Ronald, "in a country that is nearly always covered with ice and snow?"

"Moss," replied Mr. Brown. "It's rather funny, but there are two kinds of moss in Lapland, one a white kind that is almost as white as snow, and the other a black kind which covers over the trees, and gives them a very ugly look. But the Laplander doesn't mind the look; he rejoices when the trees are thickly covered with this black moss, for the reindeer prefers it to any other food, and will find it though buried in the snow. But if

the moss fails, or chances to be covered with a coating of ice which even the noses of the reindeer can't break, then there is famine indeed."

"Our red deer never hurt people, do they?" asked Katie, who was rather timid.

"They turn at bay sometimes," said Mr. Brown. "A gentleman on horseback once met a hunted stag on a narrow path up a hillside near here. There was the sea a hundred feet below, and no room to turn. But for the sagacity of his horse, that just dodged a blow from the stag's horn, they'd have been chucked over the cliff together, for certain. As it was, the stag went instead."

"There's our house," cried Katie, "and there's mother looking out for us. Thank you very, very much for the beautiful ride——"

"And the talk," added Ronald. "It's been tremendously interesting."

"Well, come and see Willie, won't you?" said Mr. Brown. "He'd be so glad if you would, and he'd talk to you about the deer as long as you liked. And if you could bring something to read to him he'd be just delighted."

"That I will—I'd like to," said the boy, heartily. So, Mr. Brown having told Ronald where he lived, and the way to get there, and received further thanks for his kindness from Mrs. Darnton, they parted, very pleased with their adventure.

CHAPTER III.

STORY-TELLING.

It was not long before Ronald fulfilled his promise to go and see Willie Brown. He was a boy who could not be happy long without a chum, and he was not shy at making acquaintances. Even if he had been, the thought that he could possibly do a little to cheer the dull life of one so sadly afflicted as Willie, would have made him ready and eager to pay the visit.

But Ronald found, rather to his surprise, that the blind boy was neither dull nor sad. On the contrary, he seemed as full of ideas, and plans, and merry chat as any boy Ronnie had ever met.

Willie had been educated at a special school, where he had been taught carpenter's work, and the neatly made articles—a bracket, a box, a picture-frame, and a stool which he showed as his handiwork, filled Ronald with wonder and admiration. He could tell each kind of wood by merely passing his fingers over it, and at the time of Ronnie's visit was making a cage for a pair of white mice that some one had promised to give him.

The boys soon became friendly over their mutual interest in animals, and particularly over the Exmoor deer, of which Ronald could never hear enough. When Willie told him that sometimes, in a hard winter, the pretty creatures would venture quite close to the villages for food, Ronald could

not help hoping that the coming winter might be very severe indeed, that he might have the delight of feeding, and possibly taming, some hungry wanderer from the woods.

Willie, in his turn, was intensely interested in what Ronald could tell him of the deer that may be seen in the parks near London, especially those that inhabit Bushey Park, and are so tame that they will hardly take the trouble to get out of the way of the omnibus that drives through the park on its route from Twickenham to Hampton Court. The notion of there being any possibility of friendliness between a deer and an omnibus struck Willie as so funny that he kept breaking out into laughter over it again and again.

Although Willie hated the thought of the beautiful stag being killed, he liked to hear Ronald describe the handsome horses he had seen a few days before at the meet, and the great pack of hounds that had passed through the village in a mass, with their tails all up and all wagging at once, "like—like—like a corn-field when the wind blows!" he concluded.

"Did you hear any of the dogs' names?" asked Willie. "Hunting-dogs have such pretty names sometimes."

"I heard the huntsmen speak to two or three," said Ronald. "And they were so good and obedient, and answered at once. One was 'Darby,' I remember, and one was 'Rice'—isn't *Rice* a funny name for a dog?—and one was 'Velvet.' I like 'Velvet' the best. They were not so

pretty as the names of dogs in *Hart-Leap Well.* They were 'Blanch,' and 'Swift,' and 'Music.'"

"What is Hart-Leap Well?" asked Willie.

"Oh, haven't you ever heard it? It is a rather long piece of poetry that the boys learnt at my school," said Ronnie. "I've never learnt it—I'm not a bit sharp at learning poetry, the rhymes bother me so — but I've listened to the others saying it till I know the story by heart. And it's all about a deer."

"Oh, do tell it to me," begged the blind boy. "I love hearing a story."

"I'll try, if you don't mind my not saying it in verse," said Ronald.

"Never mind the verse. Fire away!" said Willie.

"Well, it begins about a knight who was riding a tired horse very slowly down from the moor. There had been a hunt that day—a stag hunt—but the stag had got away, and all the horses and men and dogs were dead beat, and had left off running, all except this one, Sir Walter, and he had made up his mind he *wouldn't* be done. So he went to a vassal's door, and shouted, 'Bring out another horse.' Very loud and masterful, just like that. And the vassal, very meek and humble, as I s'pose he had to be else he'd get his head chopped off, brings out another horse at once — his very best, saddled all ready, and the knight mounts him and rides away. It was the third horse Sir Walter had had that day.

"Well, he called to the poor tired dogs, and only those three, Blanch, Swift, and Music, came to him, and those were so worn out that before the knight had gone far up the mountain, they one by one dropped down dead."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Willie. "Go on!"

"Well, Sir Walter could see the stag far up the mountain, and would not quit following him. So on and on he went, urging his horse till it was smothered all over in white foam, and at last the poor stag—a hart, it is called, which means the same thing — dropped down dead, too, and the knight came up, and found it lying stretched out upon its side."

"This is a dismal story; everything drops down dead," commented Willie. "I s'pose that old knight does at last, when he has killed everything else! Never mind. Let's hear the end."

"No, the knight didn't die," said Ronald; "he was perfectly delighted. He walked round and round the poor dead hart, and fairly gloated over it. He was that proud and pleased to think he was the only one in at the death, he didn't know what to do with himself. And when he climbed up to the top of the hill, and found by the hoof-marks on the ground that the stag had come all the way from the very summit, down to where he fell dead, in three terrific leaps, he was more delighted than ever.

"I ought to have said that the stag lay down and died close by a spring of water—I suppose, poor beast, trying to get a drink—and the knight

decided that, in memory of it all, the wonderful chase, and the wonderful leap, and the great triumph of himself getting the stag, all on his own, after everybody else had given up, he would build a pleasure-house, and an arbour, and put stones to mark the places where the hoof-prints had been, and turn the spring into a marble fountain, and call it 'Hart-Leap Well.' And so he did.

"But that's not all of it. Years afterwards, a gentleman, William Wordsworth, who wrote the poem, came travelling that way, and found it all a desolation. The pleasure-house had gone entirely, and only withered stumps of trees showed where the arbour had been; but he saw three stone pillars standing in a line, a long way apart, up the hill-side, and a ruined, overgrown fountain at the foot.

"So he asked an old shepherd, who was coming that way, what was the meaning of it all. Then the shepherd told him the story of the chase, and the death of the hart, and why the pillars were set up. He said a sort of curse had fallen on the place, and no animal could ever be persuaded to drink at the fountain, and that in the night, the water of the fountain would *groan!*

"And he said, too, that some people thought a murder must have been committed there, but that he believed it was all on account of the poor dead hart, because it had been so cruelly driven to death, and all nature was mourning for it. And Wordsworth, who was a very kind man, and very fond of animals, thought so, too; so he came home

and wrote a poem about it, and called it 'Hart-Leap Well.' That's all!"

"It's a sad story," said Willie. "I like stories that end up all right. I know some verses about a deer that a lady taught me who was staying here one summer. They do end all right. I'll say them now if you like."

"Go ahead!" said Ronnie. "I like to hear other people say poetry, though I can't myself."

So in a clear, pleasant voice, Willie began:

THE BALLAD OF SAINT GILES AND THE DEER.*

All in the forest far away,
  Where no one ever came,
There dwelt a good man old and gray—
  Saint Giles the hermit's name.

His forest home a rocky cave
  Beneath an aspen tree;
And for his friend Saint Giles did have
  A Deer, who wandered free.

A gentle red and mottled Deer
  Who made her home close by;
Who, at his call, came without fear,
  Forgetting to be shy.

Sure never in all lovely France
  Was there a deer so tame;
Oh, but to see her start and prance
  When he would call her name!

She gave him milk, his simple fare,
  And browsed upon the green
Ah! such a gentle, loving pair
  I wis was never seen.

* From "The Book of Saints and Friendly Beasts," by Abbie Farwell Brown. By permission of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, U.S.A.

And he was happy in his cell,
  And joyous 'neath his trees,
Content with woodland beasts to dwell,
  His only neighbours these.

The wood was dark, the wood was grim,
  And never till one day
Had human voices troubled him,
  Or world-folk passed that way.

But on a dewy spring-time morn
  When April climbed the hill,
There came the wind of silver horn,
  Halloos, and whistles shrill;

The galloping of horses' feet,
  The pow'rful bay of hounds,
Broke through the forest silence sweet,
  And echoed deadly sounds.

Saint Giles sat in his lonely cell
  When thus the rout drew nigh;
But at the noise his kind heart fell,
  And sorrow dimmed his eye.

He loved not men who hunt to kill,
  Loved not the rich and grand,
For in those days the pagans still
  Held lordship in the land.

But scarcely had he reached the door
  And seized his staff of oak,
When, like a billow, with a roar
  The chase upon him broke.

With one last hope of dear escape,
  Into the open space
Bounded a light and graceful shape—
  The quarry of the chase.

All flecked with foam, all quivering
  With weariness and fear,
Crouched at his feet the hunted thing,
  His gentle friend, the Deer.

RONALD AND THE RED DEER.

Behind her bayed the pack of hounds,
  Their cruel teeth gleamed white,
Nearing with eager leaps and bounds;
  He turned sick at the sight.

Saint Giles looked down upon the deer,
  Saint Giles looked up again;
He saw the danger drawing near,
  And death with all its pain.

He laid his hand upon her head—
  The soft head of his friend—
"And shall I let thee die?" he said,
  "And watch thy hapless end?"

He stooped and gently murmured, "Nay!"
  Stroking her mottled side,
He stepped before her where she lay:
  "They slay me first!" he cried.

Her frightened eyes looked up at him,
  Her little heart beat high,
She trembled sore in every limb,—
  The bushes parted nigh.

"Halloo! Halloo!" the huntsmen cried
  As through the hedge they burst;
An archer all in green espied
  The crouching quarry first.

Swift as a thought his arrow flew,
  Saint Giles threw out his arm.
Alack! The aim was all too true,
  Saint Giles must bear the harm.

The arrow pierced too well—too well;
  All in that mournful wood
Saint Giles upon the greensward fell,
  And dyed it with his blood.

He fell, but falling laid his hand
  Upon the trembling Deer—
"My life for hers, dost understand,
  He cried so all could hear.

Now as upon the green he lay
  All in a deathly swound,
The king dashed up with courtiers gay,
  And looked upon his wound.

The king rode up, and "Ho!" he cried,
  "Whom find we in our wood?
Who spares the Deer with mottled hide?
  Who sheds an old man's blood?"

The king looked down with ruthful eye,
  When all the thing was told,
"Alack!" he cried, "he must not die—
  So kind a man, and bold

"Bear me the Saint into his cave;
  Who falls to save his friend
Deserves for leech his king to have;
  I will his pallet tend."

They spared to him the sore-bought Deer,
  And, in that lowly cell,
For many weary days and drear,
  The king came there to dwell.

The king, who was a godless man,
  A pagan, heart and soul,
Played nurse until the wound began
  To heal, and Giles was whole.

But in the little forest cave
  The king learned many things
Known to the meanest Christian slave,
  But secret from the kings.

For good Saint Giles had won his heart
  By his brave deed and bold,
And ere the great king did depart
  His Christian faith he told.

And while the red-deer stood beside,
  The king gave Giles his word
That e'er a Christian he would bide,
  And keep what he had heard.

And so the monarch rode away
  And left the two alone ;
Saint Giles, a happy man that day,
  The good Deer still his own.

Safe from the eager hunting horde,
  The Saint would keep his friend,
Protected by the king's own word
  Thenceforth unto the end.

For unmolested in his cell,
  Careless of everything,
Giles, with his friendly Deer, could dwell,
  Liege to a Christian king.

"That's a jolly story," said Ronald, when Willie had finished his recitation. "How fine to be so brave! I hope it is true. Now I think I shall have to go home."

"Well, come again soon, won't you?" said the blind boy. "And do you think you could bring the book that has your story in it, in verse? Then you could read it to me, couldn't you? I love poetry, even if it is rather sad."

"All right, I will!" said Ronald. "Now I'm off. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and thank you no end!" said Willie.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNTHOUGHT-OF REWARD.

RONALD kept his word, and during the months that followed he went often to see the blind boy, and generally took a book with him to read aloud. In return he used frequently to get Willie to recite one or other of the many pieces of poetry which

he had learned from friends, or out of the volumes in Braille type which he, from time to time, had sent him. But "Saint Giles and the Deer" always remained prime favourite.

Ronnie was an enthusiastic admirer of courage. He was very fond of looking at that stone knight who lies in an alcove in Porlock church—Sir Simon Fitz Roges, who fought in the Crusades under Richard I. He was quite sure that if he had lived in those days he would have been a crusader too. And never did a stag-hunt take place in that neighbourhood, but Ronnie cherished a secret hope that the hunted deer would find refuge in their front garden, that he, like Giles, might defend it against all comers, and save it from the dogs.

Of course, after that, it would become quite tame, and be his faithful friend and companion to its life's end. He even, on occasion, went so far as to fancy himself walking down the village street with his stately pet following at his heels, the envy of every other boy, and the admiration of all who saw them. But this dream never came true.

Meanwhile, though Katie's health was certainly improving, things were not going very well with the Darntons. Since coming to Porlock, those "shares" in a certain business concern on which the widow depended for her scanty income, became of very much less value, and the prospect for herself and children was anything but cheerful.

Mrs. Darnton had always hoped to be able to keep her delicate little daughter at home with her,



B.O.W.

"Fawns are gentle creatures."

not, indeed, in idleness, but pleasantly occupied in sharing with her the light domestic duties of their humble home, and in saving money—which we are told is as good as earning it—by making their own dresses and millinery.

But now it seemed needful that Katie should in some way add something to the family income, if not at Porlock, at least as soon as possible after their return to London. The difficult question was, What could she do?

The girl was not strong enough, nor ever would be, to undertake any occupation which would compel her to go out daily in all weathers; and most home employments seemed very hard and ill-paid. Embroidery had for a long time been Katie's pleasure and pride, and many pretty pieces of work she had turned out to adorn the home, or as presents for friends. But Mrs. Darnton had found upon enquiry that, even if Katie could get employment of this kind, she would have to sit at work for many hours a day, to earn very little money.

"If only we had a few pounds to spare," she sighed. "I could have her taught to work in gold and silver thread. That is so much better paid for."

"Oh, mother, I wish I could!" said Katie. "I know I should like that."

"Yes, and I have heard that good workers, as I believe you would be, can always get plenty to do. But it's no use thinking about it. We have not the money."

That spring was late and cold, even at sheltered Porlock; perhaps it seemed colder than usual to

the Darntons, because never before had they been obliged to spare their coal. Katie's fingers were sometimes almost too chilled for her to hold her needle, but still she "kept her hand in" at the dainty work she so much loved, by using up every scrap of embroidery silk that her mother had laid by, and showed her skill in working all sorts of odd colours into really pretty patterns of her own invention.

Meanwhile, she dreamed of the glories of gold and silver, and longed in vain for the five pounds which was the lowest sum for which the use of such precious material might be hers.

One clear, cold March evening, Ronnie had been his usual two miles' walk to spend an hour with the blind boy, and was on his way back. He was by this time quite used to the velvet blackness of a country night, and did not mind his lonely tramp home. This time he was thinking less of his boy-friend and the jolly book he had been reading to him, than of his mother and Katie, and their family cares. He could not help seeing how anxious his dear mother was looking, and even Katie seemed to have stopped getting better, and to be almost as languid and pale as she was before they left London.

"It's the worry of thinking what we are going to do," he said to himself. "Oh, don't I wish I were a few years older and able to do something for my own living! If I were earning money, they should never have to worry and fret any more."

Hush! What was that? Could it be the echo of his own footsteps, or was some one following him? Ronnie paused, and distinctly heard a strange, light tread behind him on the hard, dry road. The place was not so deserted at that early hour for it to be surprising that another traveller should be coming the same way; but it was not a man's measured tread, nor yet the tripping step of woman or child. There was, as I have said, something *strange* about it, and Ronnie, with his head full of the elves and witches and uncanny creatures of the aforesaid "jolly" stories he had been reading, felt his teeth chatter, and a cold perspiration burst from every pore.

However, he started off at a run, and never stopped till, trembling and panting, he flung himself against the garden gate of his own home, and stumbled to the door.

Ronald did not say a word to his mother or Katie about this small scare, for it seemed so silly; but he remembered with a sick qualm that he had faithfully promised Willie to go to him again on the following evening and finish the story; and he found himself wishing that something might happen to prevent him.

He even began to consider whether he could not *invent* some excuse for breaking his appointment, so mean do fear and cowardice make us. But the sight of Willie's wistful, waiting face rose up before him, and he felt that Willie must not be disappointed. That would be so unkind. Then followed the thought, none too welcome,

that here was an opportunity of being brave—not at all the sort that Ronald would have liked; still, here it was, and there was no getting away from it. So he braced himself, and rose to the occasion, thus preparing himself for something greater by and by.

It was all very well going to Willie Brown's in the daylight, but it was a quaky moment for Ronald when, after winding up his hour with Willie on a rather more creepy tale than before, he set out in the starlight for the two miles of lonely walk home.

How he dreaded that particular piece of the road, made even darker than the rest by the interlacing branches of trees, where he had met with his fright the previous evening. His heart beat as loudly as his footfalls, so that he could not easily, without standing still, have heard anything else. Yet he *did* stand still on purpose to listen.

Pit-pat! Pit-pat! It was there again. It was coming after him! For a few seconds Ronnie stood rooted to the spot; he felt paralysed with terror.

It was in that interval of stillness that another sound reached the boy's straining ear—a low moan, as of some human being in pain. Then the murmured words, "Oh, dear! He's gone past. He didn't hear me. Oh, dear; oh, dear!"

The voice seemed to come from a hollow at the roadside, at a specially dark part which he had just been hurrying through. Some one had met with an accident—some one was hurt. But could

he—dare he retrace his steps to the spot and face the terrible thing that was following him?

What would the crusader have done? What would he who defended the hunted deer have done? What would anybody do who was not a rank coward? Certainly not run away, and leave a helpless and lonely fellow-creature to suffer.

Ronnie stiffened his muscles, and set his teeth, and, with clenched hands, turned about and marched boldly towards the point whence the voice and groans seemed to come.

"Is anything the matter? Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes—oh, yes! Please come here! Close to the gate!" answered the tones of an old woman, in painful gasps.

Ronnie could just see a dark heap huddled up in the blackest shadow, and ran across to the spot.

Here he found a poor old woman, lying half in and half out of a dry ditch.

"I slipped," she said. "I slipped somehow just as I came through the gate. I can't pull myself up by my hands for they are crippled with rheumatics. But, my dear, if you could help me on to my feet, I think I could get home."

"I'll try!" said Ronald, and putting both arms round the old lady's body, he succeeded by a mighty effort in getting her on to her knees on the grass by the roadside.

Here, for a few seconds she sat panting, her arms and poor knotted and deformed hands hanging helpless by her sides. Then he tried again, and

got her staggering to her feet. He steadied her for a minute, and then she uttered a sigh of relief.

"That's it! Now I'm all right. Now I shall soon be home. Heaven bless you, my dear, for a kind, good boy. If you hadn't helped me, I might have lain there all night. I was so afraid you were running away from the stag and would not stop for me."

"What stag?" asked Ronnie, who had forgotten his fright in his efforts to be of use.

"There was one trotting after you as you passed me," said the old lady. "Poor thing, food is scarce now, and it's been about here, folks have told me, for days. When you turned back it ran away."

"Oh, that was what made the footsteps, then!" exclaimed Ronnie. "I heard it, and last night, too, but I never thought it could be a *deer!* How hungry it must be, to come out into the road like that."

"It has been a hard winter, but the trees and hedges will soon be shooting now, and the wood-creatures will then be all right."

The old lady was slowly walking on as she spoke, but seemed very feeble and tottering.

"Lean on me," said Ronald, "I'm very strong; and let me see you safe home. Have you far to go?"

"Not very far. Just round to the right, and a stone's throw down the lane," said the old lady. "You are a dear, kind boy," she added. "What is your name?"

Ronald told her.

"Oh!" she said, "I have heard of you and your mother. And you have a sister, haven't you? I know quite well where you live."

After that she said no more, until they reached the door of her cottage.

Then she turned on Ronald with a genial smile, in which he even fancied there was a gleam of fun.

"Now, Ronald," she said, "I'm going to behave like the old witch in a fairy-tale. I'm going to tell you where to find your fortune. Listen to me."

Ronald was listening with all his ears.

"As soon as ever it is light to-morrow morning," the old lady went on, "you go into the woods by the path at the top of this lane—you know it, I dare say — and turn to the left over the little bridge, and then take the right hand path of the two that branch off from there. Walk straight on until you come to a very fine beech tree, then look carefully all around it for about ten yards, see what you can find, and bring it home. That will be your reward for what you have done for me to-night."

Ronnie looked puzzled.

"Don't you believe me?" asked the old lady.

"Yes—oh, yes," Ronnie hastened to say, "but it does seem funny. And must I go so very early?"

"Yes! Unless you want others to get there before you," answered this strange friend. "It's

the early bird that will carry off the worm, and I want that to be you."

"Oh, I'll go," Ronnie promised her. "And thank you. But I can't imagine——! Never mind, I'll get there with the first streak of daylight to-morrow. Please tell me the way I am to go, over again."

So the old lady repeated her directions, and they said good-night to one another, and parted.

Of course Ronnie told his adventure to his mother and sister the moment he reached home. They were as much at a loss as he was to guess what the strange old lady could possibly mean, but Katie begged to go with him on his search in the morning.

Neither of them slept much that night, but Katie was awake first, and called her brother while it was still dark. With the earliest peep of daylight they started out, full of romantic anticipation.

"Whatever can it be?" said Katie, as they ran along in the crisp, keen air. "Is it a bag of money, do you think? Or a magic ring, or a wishing-stone?"

"I hope it isn't a hoax," said Ronnie, "or a practical joke of any sort."

"Oh, she wouldn't play a trick on you, I'm sure," said Katie, "because you were so kind."

Arrived at the little bridge just inside the wood, the quest began to grow thrilling, and taking each other's hands they ran on together through paths already cheerful with the songs of the birds.

When they reached the beech-tree which was their goal, Katie was suddenly overcome with a nervous dread of she knew not what, and hung back.

"You go and look, Ronnie," she said breathlessly. "I'll stay here within sight of you."

So Ronald went on alone. In a very few minutes there was a joyful shout. "Katie! Katie! Come and look! I've found it! Come and look!"

The girl flew towards her brother, who came rushing back to her. In each hand he waved triumphantly aloft a magnificent branching antler, that gleamed like gold in the first rays of the sun.

"Aren't they grand? Aren't they beautiful?" he cried. "We can sell them for a lot of money. That's what she meant about finding a reward. Fancy, a *pair*, too! Aren't they beauties?"

"But—did a stag just drop them, then?" asked Katie, rather bewildered.

"I suppose the old lady saw them yesterday, you know, when she came through the wood. This is the season the deer always shed their horns. But these are handsome ones! Let's go back and show them to her, and thank her."

Their new friend's cottage was not far from the wood, and it was still very early when the young people reached it, but the old lady was watching for them.

"Ah!" she said, when they came up to the gate, "then you were in time. I'm so glad. I was afraid perhaps somebody would have been there

before you and carried them off. Lots of men and boys will be searching the woods for dropped antlers now. I never knew a pair to be found so close together before. They are generally discovered one at a time, and sometimes miles apart. I should have picked them up when I saw them yesterday, only with my crippled hands I could never have brought them home."

"And do you really want us to have them?" said Ronald. "Because, you saw them first, you know!"

"Yes, I do want you to. I want you to take them to Minehead, and sell them, and keep the money. You did me a very great kindness last night."

Of course Ronnie protested that the kindness was nothing; still he was very delighted with his reward; and when he and Katie had again thanked their friend, they carried their trophy home in triumph.

It was by Mrs. Darnton's advice that they showed the horns to Mr. Brown, and asked his opinion as to what to do with them.

He was much interested, and full of admiration. So fine a pair of antlers had not been picked up in that neighbourhood for many years. They were evidently from the head of a healthy and fully developed stag, for they bore all the branches so prized by the sportsman, and were quite well shaped.

"You had better let me dispose of these for you," he said. "I know a man in Minehead who

deals in such things, and I could get a better price for them than you would."

"But that will be no end of a bother to you, won't it?" said Ronnie, though he looked very pleased.

"Not a bit!" Mr. Brown assured him heartily. "Besides, you've been good to my boy, and given him no end of happy hours. I shall be as glad to do a good bit of business for you as if they were my own."

So Ronald willingly left the horns with him.

"I do wonder how much they will fetch," he said to his mother and sister. "I didn't like to ask."

"Perhaps a pound!" said Katie. "Oh, wouldn't it be lovely!"

But Mrs. Darnton shook her head. "Don't expect too much," she cautioned them.

In about a week, however, Mr. Brown came to see them, and told them he had sold the antlers to a gentleman staying in Minehead, who was making a collection of such things. He was rich, and very pleased to get such handsome specimens.

Then Mr. Brown counted out upon the table, one after the other, *five* shining, golden sovereigns.

The Darntons could hardly believe their eyes. It seemed too good to be true; and kind Mr. Brown indeed appeared, as he had said, to be as delighted as though the good fortune were his own.

"Oh, mother!" cried Ronald, hugging her when

they were alone, "isn't it grand? Isn't it as good as fairies? Now Katie can learn the gold embroidery and soon be a rich woman."

"It is better than fairies," said Mrs. Darnton. "It is the goodness and love of God. This is a boon from Him, and I can't tell you the load it has taken off my mind about Katie. And it is a generous gift from you, dear Ronnie, to her."

"It is awfully sweet of you, Ronnie," said his sister, kissing him. "There never was such a splendid brother, I do think! And it seems, too, like a present to all of us from the beautiful red deer."

THE CUCKOO'S NURSE.

MR. and Mrs. Wagtail are as merry a little couple as you would see in a day's walk. Pied-Wagtail, by the way, they call themselves; it sounds more genteel, and prevents them being mistaken for the ordinary wagtail, or the yellow wagtail.

They build their nest in the forked branch of an old tree that overhangs a pleasant stream. They choose this place because of the great number of gnats and flies which are always flitting in their mazy dances above the surface of the water, for flies and insects are the wagtail's favourite food. They are also very clever in catching tiny fish, like minnows; though sometimes, when engaged in this sport, they are themselves the victims of a rough practical joke on the part of some saucy blackbird or thrush, who will gravely watch the fishing operations, and, when a particularly tempting-looking prize is secured, will pounce upon it and snatch it away before it has time to slip down the wagtail's own throat.

In the spring-time Mr. Pied-Wagtail "picks up" a good living by following the plough. Not that he actually does any ploughing, but he runs nimbly in the furrows as they are freshly turned by the ploughshare, and seizes upon the larvæ of beetles, and the small worms that are thus exposed to sight. He is welcomed as a kindly little friend by the cows in the pastures, for he takes from

their backs and sides the insects that sting and torment them. He runs round about the cattle, and almost under their feet, in happy confidence and perfect safety, knowing that the huge creatures would not hurt him for the world. And all the while he is thus busy, his long tail is quivering and trembling and twitching, as if it were hung on springs.

Some naturalists have believed that this peculiar movement of the little creature's tail is to disturb the flies, so that they may be more easily caught. But others say that this cannot be right, because the bird's tail jerks and "wiggle-waggles" just the same when he is not hunting for food; also, that his bright eyes are so sharp-sighted that he can see well enough where the flies are, without needing to stir them up, so to speak, with his tail. These observers consider that the extraordinary length of the tail, and its queer movement, are chiefly to help the bird in keeping his balance.

"Nanny Washtail," as this pretty black and white bird is sometimes called by country children, is a cheerful, lively, restless creature, who seems never to quite know his own mind. He will run a little way, then take to his wings and fly a few yards, catch an insect, then stand still and shake his tail, as if considering what he should do next. All at once he will start off in a great hurry to go nowhere in particular, and forget what he came for, before he is half-way there, like some children when sent upon an errand. So he alights upon

his feet again, and shakes his tail to help his memory.

"Dear me!" he says to himself, "I believe I meant to go to the water and look for a fish, but I'm not sure. A nice, crisp beetle will do just as well, though, and I can soon find one. Ah, there goes a fine, juicy fly!" and away he darts in pursuit.

Sometimes a strange thing befalls Mr. Wagtail and his wife. They have made their nest, and Mrs. Wagtail has laid in it five little bluish white eggs, speckled and splashed with gray. But one fine morning, when she returns to the nest after a short absence of fly-hunting, she finds *six* eggs, and the extra one is much larger than her own, and of a brown instead of a blue tint.

She is very much puzzled at first, but after talking the matter over with her husband, they both conclude that either she must have counted wrongly, or that she laid another egg and forgot it. Anyhow, she sits upon it along with the others, and in due time the little chicks are all hatched out.

Then comes another surprise: Mr. and Mrs. Wagtail find that they have one baby that is ever so much finer and larger a bird than any of the others. He is always hungry, and his big, wide open beak is continually pushed up in front of the smaller nestlings to seize every scrap of food the parent birds bring. They work hard from morning till night, but never seem able to satisfy this great creature's appetite. Yet they never

complain. Perhaps in their little hearts they are proud of having such a fine child. Anyway, he takes up nearly all the room in the nest, and devours the "lion's share" of the food without apparently causing any anger on the part of the wagtails.

They never guess that while the nest was left unguarded, lazy Mrs. Cuckoo, who never takes the trouble to prepare a cradle of her own, came carrying her egg in her beak, and popped it in among Mrs. Wagtail's little group, to be hatched and tended by her. Yet that was what really took place. It used to be thought that the young cuckoo, as it grew up, would deliberately throw the other little ones out of the nest.

Some people who have studied the habits and growth of birds very closely, say that he would not be strong enough to do this. So, possibly, when the nestlings of the wagtail, or hedge-sparrow, or any other small bird which the cuckoo chooses as a nurse for her own infant, are found tossed out upon the ground, it is only that the young cuckoo by its size has accidentally crowded them out. At least we will hope so, for he is a handsome bird, and his note in spring-time is so pleasant that it is hard to think very ill of him.

Mrs. Wagtail has a good deal of trouble with her nurse-child, for he remains a helpless baby needing to be fed till he is so big as to look, sitting on her little nest (as some one has put it), "like a giant in a cock-boat." After he is



"Here comes your father at last!"

fledged, he will follow her a little while, but not for long, as he needs so much food, and likes bigger mouthfuls than she is able to provide. So they part good friends.

But Mrs. Wagtail's neighbours think she has been very badly used, and they and their children try to chase the young cuckoo away. So persistent are they in pursuing and persecuting the interloper, that often he has to take shelter among the thickest foliage of the nearest tree.

When the wagtails succeed in rearing their own brood unmolested, they love to feed and tend their young after the little ones are fully fledged and able to fly. They lead them out into ploughed fields and pastures seeking for insects, calling joyously to the nestlings when a fly is caught. And we are told that the little creatures spring forward with quick motions to receive the proffered dainties, showing "the graceful actions so prominent in this charming group of sylph-like choristers." On the sea-shore, also, the pied-wagtail may often be seen, feeding upon the tiny fishes that are left behind by the receding waves.

WAITING FOR SUPPER.

"OH, mother, what a long time father is gone!" said a little fox-cub named Tawny, one summer evening. "He said when he went out, that he would soon be back with something nice for supper; and I'm *so* hungry."

"So am I," cried Ginger; and "So am I," sang Tiptail; and "I'm sure I'm the hungriest of all," said little Fluffy, with a whine of fretfulness.

"He can't be long *now*, I should think," said the mother-fox, going to the edge of her hole and peeping out. "He said he should only go as far as Farmer Bowden's poultry-yard. He has seen some fine, fat hens there, and the chicken-house door is sometimes left open by the careless stable-boy."

"Fat hen is just *prime*," said Tawny, licking his lips; "ever so much better than the rats and mice and lizards and toads we have been having all this week. That mole we had on Sunday was rather nice, though."

"I like birds best," said Tiptail. "Only tiny birds like sparrows and finches seem nearly all feathers and bones. But there's such a lovely lot of meat on a barn-door fowl, isn't there?"

"Can't we have a lamb some day, mother?" whimpered Fluffy. "I've never tasted lamb in all my life."

"Some day you shall have some, darling!" said his fond mother; "but the sheep-folds about here

are watched by such faithful dogs that a poor fox gets no chance with them. Dear me, I do hope your father has not gone after a lamb this evening. He might, if he was not able to get a fowl. I'm always so nervous when he goes near sheep-dogs, for I know what the danger is."

"I hope those horrid huntsmen and dogs haven't caught him," said Ginger.

"They'd have some trouble, I promise you, sonny," returned his mother. "There's not a cleverer or more cunning fox in all this country than your father. He has one particular trick by which he has baffled the hounds over and over again."

"Oh, do tell us about it, mother," begged the cubs.

"It's very simple, but, wise as the hounds are, it never fails to puzzle them. You know they hunt us entirely by the *scent*. Well, often when they have actually discovered your father's hiding-place, and started him off, he has contrived to turn back on his own steps, and start again in a different direction. Sometimes he would do that same thing two or three times, so that the dogs were completely fogged, and didn't know which way to go.

"On one occasion last summer he did something very similar when the hounds were in full chase. He was a good way ahead of them, but he was getting very much exhausted, and felt he could not go much farther. So he ran back exactly the way he had come for some little distance, then gathering up all his remaining strength, he made a huge leap

to one side, and came down in a clump of bracken. Here he lay concealed and perfectly safe, while the hounds, every one of them, went dashing past the spot and right on along the road he had first taken. When they reached the end of the scent, they must have been very much astonished, for, of course, when your father turned back, the smell of him stopped as completely as if he had taken wings."

"But why couldn't they smell where he jumped on one side?" asked Tawny.

"For one thing, the scent on the ground which he had gone over twice was so strong that they would never think of leaving it. And then, you see, a fox's leap, being through the air, could not leave any smell close to the earth, where the dog snuffs for it."

"Dogs like the smell of foxes, don't they, mother?" said Fluffy, who, cuddling close to his mother's side, was more patient now he was being amused.

"I suppose they do, for they are wild to follow it," said Mrs. Vixen—for that is the name of the fox's wife—"cats, on the other hand, hate the smell of us. A fox I once knew had, at one time in his life, allowed himself to live like a tame creature among the dogs and cats belonging to a large house. Of course, he was not *really* tamed—no fox would ever forget himself to that extent — but it suited his purpose to be fed and housed by human beings for a while. When he got tired of it, he came back to the woods, and many a good story he could

tell of what he had seen and heard in the farm-yard and kitchen."

"He was 'cute, to make them feed and keep him like that, wasn't he?" said Ginger. "I'll be 'cute like that, mother, when I grow up."

"He was nothing, my child, to your own dear grandpapa," said his mother. "I can wish nothing better than that you may all take after him. Times more than I can count had he been driven out of his den by the hounds, but they never caught him. He always went the same way, and always appeared, to the hounds, to vanish over the edge of a precipice. At any rate, it was there that the scent seemed to cease, and they dared not plunge over after him or they would have been killed. But *he* wasn't killed. For he always turned up again among the fowls or geese the next night. His secret was never found out."

"What was it, mother?" asked Tiptail. "Do tell us, please. We want to learn all the secrets we can."

"Well, he simply jumped over the edge of the steep cliff into a bush, and from that bush he jumped into another lower down, then he crept into a cave, and quietly waited until all the noise of the huntsmen and the disappointed dogs had gone past up above, when he could come out in safety and go round another way home."

"What fun!" cried the cubs, delighted. "And so he never, in all his life, got caught, did he?"

"Not by dogs. He once met with a painful accident, which, but for his own courage and

presence of mind, might have been fatal. He trod upon an artfully-concealed spring-trap, and one of his front paws was caught by it. He knew that to remain there meant certain death. So he nerved himself to the utmost, and bit off the imprisoned paw, and set himself free."

"Bit off his own paw! Oh, mother!" exclaimed the cubs, "didn't it hurt dreadfully?"

"Not so much as remaining for hours in the trap, and being killed at last. But, of course, he was lame for the rest of his life."

"Were you ever hunted, mother?" asked Tawny.

"Oh, yes, several times," Vixen replied. "The first time I was not more than a month old."

"Oh, mother! And yet you got away."

"Ah, I was not alone," she replied. "I was with my own dear mother. I was at that time her only child, and when she was driven from home she said she would die with me rather than leave me to be worried by the dogs. So she picked me up in her mouth and carried me for miles, until by passing through some very wet and boggy ground, she managed to throw the dogs off the scent, and by that means we both escaped."

"Does going through wet places prevent the dogs smelling you?" asked Ginger.

"It may do so," his mother told him. "Anyhow, it is the next best thing to being able to plunge into a river. But the most exciting run and the narrowest escape I ever had was last summer. And then, I actually owed my life to the kindness of a human being.

"A human being!" cried the cubs in amazement. "What, a *man?*"

"Oh, no! I suppose for a man to take a fox's part would be impossible, though they put up with far worse evils than any fox can be. But this was a lady—a dear, little, sweet-faced, gray-haired lady, who lived by herself in a cottage near a wood. I had been running for hours, and what with turning, and doubling, and taking wide circuits, I must have covered thirty or forty miles. I was foot-sore, and parched with thirst, and panting as if my heart would burst. I made sure my last hour was near, for the hounds were in full cry close behind me, and my strength was failing.

"'Alas!' I said to myself, 'in a few moments I shall be torn to pieces, and my little ones will be left to starve!' Just then, I saw an open gate in a wall just in front of me. I dashed in, hardly noticing that a lady was in a garden inside attending to her flowers. Opposite the gate was a door, also open, and as it looked dark and quiet, I shot straight in, hoping to hide for a few minutes, and take breath. No sooner was I inside, than the lady came in after me, and shut and fastened the door in as great haste as she could.

"This frightened me very much, for I fancied myself trapped, and I hid under a table in a dark corner, making up my mind to fight for my life if any one touched me. But, instead of attempting to hurt me, the lady ran through the cottage, and set wide another door at the back. 'Poor thing!' I heard her say. 'Life is dear to us all. How

people can chase you to death for fun, I cannot understand. There! Be off into the open, and I'll save you if I can.'

"I saw that she meant me to go unharmed and free; so I flew out at the back door with a heart full of hope, knowing how my having passed through that house would break the scent. And before nightfall, half dead with fatigue, I got safely home.

"Afterwards I heard from a friend who lived in the neighbourhood, that the horsemen and dogs surrounded that cottage for nearly an hour, while the master of the hunt hammered in vain at the door. For that dear little lady had determined to give me a good start. At last she opened an upper window, and told them they might all go home, for the fox was no doubt miles away.

"The men were very angry, and the dogs had already destroyed her garden and torn the creepers off her walls, trying to get in; but she said she didn't mind. None of God's creatures, she said, should be done to death by her help. So there was nothing left for them to do but to use bad language under their breath and go away."

"Don't men sometimes kill us that they may steal our coats?" asked Tawny. Little Fluffy had gone fast asleep, and Tiptail was blinking.

"Not much in England," said his mother. "The American red fox has a fine, rich brown fur, full, long, and soft, which is coveted by human beings, and leads to thousands of the beautiful creatures being murdered every year. More sought after

still is the coat of the silver fox of North America, as the animal is very rare. Then there is the Arctic fox, a handsome, bright-eyed little fellow, with long silky fur, snow-white in winter, mottled in spring, and bluish-gray in summer time.

"But he is nothing like so cunning as we English foxes are. He has been known actually to watch a hunter setting a trap, and the moment his back was turned, to rush straight into it! He has some cleverness, I have heard, in imitating the cries of various birds, to entice them to be caught, but that seems to be about all he can do.

"The queerest of our relations is a tiny creature, called the Fennec fox, which goes to quite an extreme of fashion in the matter of ears and tail; those it wears are so ridiculously large as to be as big as all the rest of its body put together. The Fennec lives in sandy deserts in the north of Africa, and, like most of our family, lives in burrows which it digs out for itself. I have heard that it is very fond of sweet fruits, particularly dates, and eggs. These are, no doubt, very nice, and some of our people have a great taste for grapes, but nothing to my mind comes up to a good fat goose or duckling.

"And speaking of ducklings," mother Fox continued, "your father has the very cleverest trick for catching them I ever heard of. Many a rich feast have we shared by its means. But it is only when the ducks are in the water that it can be done.

"He goes to the place where the ducks are swimming about, and, if it is running water, he hides himself among the bushes on the bank some little distance up the stream; if it is still water, like a pond or lake, he plans to work from the windward side of the ducks—that is, you know, the side that the wind is blowing from. Then he tears up a good bunch of rushes and grasses, and gently floats it on the water. Presently it reaches the spot where the ducks are, but if they chance to be a little startled by it—for they are poor silly things—they soon see that it is quite harmless, and go on enjoying themselves.

"Then he sends along another wisp or two of rushes, and keeps on doing so until the ducks get so accustomed to it as to take no notice. Then, seizing a bigger bunch than ever in his mouth, he launches himself very quietly on the water, and swims down to the midst of the ducks, with only his ears and the tip of his nose above the surface, and these pretty well hidden by the stuff he carries. You may be sure he never fails to secure a prize."

"That's what I shall do when I get big," said Ginger, licking his lips at the thought.

"I have heard," said the mother, "of the same kind of scheme being successfully carried out by means of fir-branches. The fox floated branch after branch among a flock of ducks until they got quite used to seeing them come, then, finding a bigger branch than the rest, couched himself upon it, and drifted calmly into the midst of them before any

of them had the least suspicion of it. But, unless you happen to be in a part of the country where there are plenty of broken branches to be picked up, it would be ever so much easier with the wisps of rushes."

"I saw father go into the brook one day with a little bunch of moss in his mouth," said Tiptail. "And there weren't any ducks anywhere about that I could see. What was that for?"

"Did he go in *backwards*, where the bank sloped gently into deep water?" asked the mother.

"Yes, that's just what he did," answered the little one. "And then when he was all under water except the tip of his nose, he stood quite still for a minute. Then he let the tuft of moss go, and scrambled out of the brook in a great hurry, and shook himself, and galloped away. What *was* he doing, mother?"

"Since you have happened to see your respected papa engaged in a necessary operation," replied mother Fox, rather mysteriously, "and have asked me about it, I think he would not mind my telling you. Indeed, I consider that you are all quite old enough to know that now and then it becomes absolutely needful for us to—er—get rid of the fleas! And there is no better plan than that which you saw your father carry out. You first take a tuft of dry moss in your mouth; then you gradually get into the water tail first, going deeper and deeper by degrees. The tormenting insects are thus driven to the dry parts for refuge, until, in

the end, every portion of the fox being under water, they are all collected upon the island of moss, when you let it go, and joyfully leave them to their fate."

"Oh, mother, what a clever idea!" said the three little foxes who had remained awake. And Tawny added, "the fox is the cleverest animal in the whole world, isn't it?"

"We are, as a race, noted for great wisdom," replied Mrs. Fox, with an air of pride; "also for tact, judgment, and singular self-control. Imagine the patience, the courage, and the endurance which it needs in order to sham death successfully. Yet the education of no fox is considered complete until he is able to imitate every appearance of death perfectly, and even to keep it up when being kicked, bruised, and thrown about!

"Ah, my little ones, I could talk to you all night about the smartness of our tribe. They outwit man, and every other creature. In vain, the hedgehog rolls itself up into a ball; the fox teases it until it is compelled to uncurl itself and expose its unprotected parts to his assaults. In vain, the bees try to drive him from their hive with repeated attacks. He simply rolls himself on the ground and crushes every one that is trying to sting him, and returns to the charge. This he does until the bees are all driven away or killed, when he can enjoy the honey at his leisure. It is the fox who often benefits by the traps laid by the bird-catcher; he gets there first, and secures the

ensnared bird so cleverly as not to get caught himself. It is the fox——"

But here Mrs. Vixen was interrupted by a rustle of the boughs that covered the mouth of the den, and the sleepy little ones opened their eyes wide.

"Here comes your father at last!" she cried, "with a fine rabbit. Wake up, cubbies—now we will have supper."

FAIRIES OF THE FLOWER GARDEN.

"OH, I say, Frank, what have you got there?" asked Nellie Wyman, pouncing upon her brother, as he came in one afternoon from school, with something wrapped in brown paper carried carefully under his arm.

"What do you want to know for, Miss Inquisitive?" returned her brother. "One thing is very certain; you'll never get that thousand pound prize."

"What thousand pound prize?" asked Nellie, opening her eyes. "I've never heard of one."

"Didn't somebody offer a prize to the person who could mind his own business, and let other people's alone?"

"Oh, but your business *is* mine," said Nellie, "because we're all in the company; and I always want to see your things because they're always so interesting."

All the while Frank had been arguing, which was only a little teasing way he had, he was unwrapping the parcel, and now held out at arms' length an oblong glass-topped box, in which were very neatly set out nearly a dozen handsome butterflies.

"I bought it off Gibbs major," he said. "It's a collection he made himself in his holidays last year, and now he wants to buy a book about butterflies, so I gave him half-a-crown for this, just as it is."

"Oh, dear," said Nellie, "they're *very* pretty, Frank, but I do hope he didn't pin them on alive!"

"What precious nigglers girls are!" said Frank. "Always thinking of something to fid-faddle about."

"No, but, Frank, *did* he?" said Nellie, "I should never have any pleasure in looking at them if he did."

"Nobody but a savage does that sort of thing, nowadays, old fussy," answered Frank. "He had a proper killing bottle, of course, that he bought at a naturalist's place, and got a chemist to fill for him. He just pops the butterfly inside, and it's dead in a second, without hurting or spoiling it in any way."

"I'm glad of that," said Nellie. "Do you know the names of them all, Frank?"

"The names are pasted on the bottom of the box, but I remember them all right. If you hold the show the right way, with their noses all pointing upwards, the top one in the middle row —that fine brown-and-yellow chap—is a 'Swallow-Tail.' He's called that because of those two points on his lower wings. The very dark one just under him is a 'Camberwell Beauty.' That lovely one below, with wings marked like peacock's feathers, is, of course, a 'Peacock.' The handsome brown one on the left-hand side of the 'Swallow-Tail,' is a 'Large Tortoise-shell.'"

"I know the top one and the bottom one on

the right-hand side, Frank," said Nellie. "The top one, with the bands of scarlet on his uniform, is a 'Red Admiral,' isn't it? Mother told me that when we saw one in the garden one day. And everybody knows that bright yellow one at the bottom, I suppose, they're so common; it's a 'Brimstone.' I've seen lots of those darling little blue ones, like that at the left side of the big dark 'Camberwell Beauty.' They always hover about the harebells at the side of a country road in August. They look just like harebells flying about; they're exactly the same lovely soft blue; but I don't know their name."

"That's a 'Silver-studded Blue,'" said Frank; "and the other little one on the opposite side is a 'Small Copper.' That beautifully-spangled large one in the bottom left-hand corner is a 'Fritillary,' and the brown-edged one just over him is a 'Clouded Yellow.'"

"Isn't the one opposite to him, just above the 'Brimstone' an 'Orange-Tip?'" asked Nellie.

"Yes, quite right!"

"I *guessed* that," said Nellie, "because its wings—the upper ones—look just as if they had been dipped in orange dye. Well, they are beauties, Frank! Let's go and show mother. She knows a lot about butterflies. She'll be ever so interested."

Mrs. Wyman had, in her younger days, made a study of insect life, and possessed a good microscope with a selection of nicely-mounted

specimens. The children had already seen these on various occasions, but were never tired of looking at them, and Frank's new purchase furnished an excellent excuse for having the collection brought out once again.

The first specimen which Mrs. Wyman generally showed was an assortment of butterflies' eggs, and this never failed to draw forth exclamations of wonder and admiration. Every one of the minute specks, when strongly magnified, was seen to be ornamented with a beautiful pattern, the shape and markings of each species being different from that of every other.

"Aren't they *sweet*," cried Nellie, as she always did when looking at these exquisite little objects. "They are just like the prettiest carved and painted beads. I should think the fairies must sometimes steal them, to thread for necklaces."

"What gets over me," said Frank, "is the sense of the little chaps that lay them, so as always to put them on a leaf that's suitable to be the food of the caterpillars when they come out."

The next series of specimens showed different parts of the caterpillar which is hatched from the egg. The young people knew well the story of "The Bishop and the Caterpillar," and had laughed over the way in which that learned gentleman and several other educated people were hopelessly puzzled by the inquiry as to "How many legs has a caterpillar?"

Neither of the Wyman children would ever be caught napping over that question, for they were well aware that out of the twelve segments, or divisions, of which a caterpillar's body consists, the first three have two legs apiece—real legs—one on each side, and that, after an interval of two segments without legs of any kind, the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth segments, are provided each with two feet, or claspers, as they are sometimes called. Then come two more legless segments—the tenth and eleventh—and the twelfth and last segment has two claspers more.

One of the most wonderful specimens which Mrs. Wyman placed beneath the microscope was that showing the forty hooks with which each clasper is furnished, to enable the creature to hold on to the stem to which it attaches itself.

"No wonder it's such a job to pull the fellows off your geraniums, mother," said Herbert, who had rushed upstairs after the other two as soon as he came in and heard what was going on. "Ten claspers, with forty hooks apiece! That's four hundred hooks to hold by. Well, I guess *I* could hang on to a rope, or anything, pretty tight if I had hooks in my fingers and toes like that. They'd come in handy at the 'Gym.,' wouldn't they, Frank?"

"The queerest thing about a caterpillar," said Mrs. Wyman, "is that its skin does not grow with the increase in size of its body, any more than your clothes do. It stretches a bit, being elastic, but that is all. This circumstance seems

very awkward for a creature that, during the first month of its existence, has become nearly ten thousand times heavier than it was when it first came out of the egg."

"Does it have to change its skin, then?" said Frank. "I didn't know that!"

"Yes; three times at least, and more generally five or six, does the caterpillar have to get out of the old coat which has grown too small for him. He wriggles about until it splits down the back, and he manages to shuffle it off. Fortunately, his new coat has been growing underneath it, so he finds himself, not naked, but ready dressed to start life afresh. And being a tidy and economical beastie, he begins by swallowing his cast-off clothes to get them out of the way.

"As soon as the caterpillar has eaten and grown to its largest possible size, a feeling of some strange change going on inside it causes it to draw out of itself a thread of fine silk, which it fastens to its hindermost pair of legs, and then proceeds to tie itself to a suitable twig, or other convenient object, by passing forty or fifty more threads round its own 'waist,' to hold it firmly, for instinct tells it that the ten claspers with their four hundred hooks, will soon become dead and useless; but bound by all those silken strands, it will be perfectly safe.

"Then, for the last time the skin dries, and splits, but not now does a living caterpillar wriggle out, for the thing inside is a queer-

shaped, dead-looking object in a horny covering —a thing that neither moves, nor eats, nor apparently has any feeling. And in this state the creature remains, according to the season, for weeks or months at a time."

"It's like a sort of seed, then, isn't it?" said Herbert, "a Butterfly-seed."

"Not a bad comparison, Herbie," agreed his mother, "for all the different parts of the perfect insect are folded up, small and undeveloped, inside the horny case, much as the parts of a plant are packed up in the seed. And, with either, warmth will bring them to life. If a caterpillar enters its chrysalis state in the spring, it is about a fortnight before it becomes a butterfly, and in the heat of summer, it may be only a week. But the caterpillar that falls into its death-like sleep in the autumn will remain motionless in its little coffin all through the winter, and not hatch out until the warm days of the following spring."

"It is wonderful," said Frank, "what a lot of differences there are in caterpillars. Some of our fellows collect them, and try to keep them in boxes to see what sort of butterflies they'll turn to. But I expect they don't know what to feed them on, for they mostly die."

"Every different caterpillar has its special food, of course; and as Frank said just now, it is wonderful that the butterfly never makes any mistakes about where to lay her eggs. The caterpillar of the common white butterfly feeds, as most people know, on cabbages; the Brimstone

butterfly on the young shoots of buckthorn; the caterpillar of your Red Admiral patronises nettle leaves, and that of the Peacock butterfly does the same.

"The varieties in the colours and markings of these little worms seems to be for their own protection. Those which—as we may suppose—are, from their sweet flavour, most tempting to birds, are generally of a grayish or green colour that makes them difficult to see upon the twigs and stalks to which they cling; while, as we find that bright coloured ones, like the black-and-yellow larvæ of the Magpie moth, are avoided by the birds, we may believe that they have a nasty taste, and their gay hues warn off their enemies from eating them by mistake."

"Gibbs major found an awfully pretty caterpillar in Epping Forest last year," said Frank. "He brought it home and showed it to me, but he never found out what butterfly it belonged to. It was bright green, with brown and white stripes down its sides, and sort of bunches of pink bristles sticking out of its back. I never saw one like it before."

"I fancy it must have been a White Admiral," said his mother. "It feeds upon the honeysuckle. Its chrysalis, or pupa, is also strange and beautiful looking, being very knobbly, and of a dark green colour, ornamented with spangles and stripes of shining silver."

"Isn't there one chrysalis that is bright and golden-looking?" asked Herbert.

"There is more than one," said Mrs. Wyman. "The chrysalis of the Red Admiral is brown with gold spots, and that of the Painted Lady greenish with gold spots. That is the meaning of the name *chrysalis;* it is from the Greek word *chrysos, gold.* The creature in this state is also called a *pupa,* which is a Latin word, meaning a swaddled baby, because it is rolled and tied up into a bundle, as babies used to be, and in some countries are to this day."

"I should like to keep a caterpillar long enough to see it do itself up, and go to sleep," said Herbert. "And then watch the butterfly come out of it in the spring."

"You would indeed be most interested," said his mother. "And if you could get one of the thin-shelled sorts you would be able to see most of the parts of the butterfly that is to be, closely packed inside. As the time draws near for the insect to emerge, even the patterns on the wings can, in strongly marked kinds, be easily made out. Then, some fine warm day, you would see the dull, dry skin beginning to crack in several places, and out would crawl a weak, trembling, new-born butterfly, which would creep into some sunny place to dry itself and get strength to fly."

"Then can't it fly when it first comes out?" asked Nellie. "And is it *wet,* mother?"

"It seems damp and feeble, just for a little while. The wings are crumpled up, and not nearly as large as they presently will be. But, as the creature drinks in the air and basks in the sunshine, it gets

stronger and more beautiful every moment, and you can fairly see the wings growing. Within an hour, as a rule, the velvet plumage is fully expanded, and the butterfly wings its way over fields and hedges in search of food."

"What do they really eat, mother?" asked Herbert. "Is it flowers, or green leaves and things, like the caterpillars did?"

"Properly speaking, a moth or butterfly does not *eat* anything——"

"Only the *clothes*-moth, eh, mother?" interrupted Nellie.

"My dear Nellie, is it possible that you still think that the moth itself—the winged insect—eats flannel and fur?" exclaimed Mrs. Wyman, laughing.

"But doesn't it?" questioned Nellie. "When holes come in things people say it is the moth, don't they?"

"They mean, or they ought to mean, the *larva*, or worm, of the moth, which, in the species you are thinking of, lives on wool or fur just as the out-of-door kinds do on green leaves. You remind me of the lady who is said to have sent a moth which she believed to be rare, in a box to a naturalist, with a nice piece of new red flannel for it to lunch off by the way. No, a butterfly cannot eat anything, it can only *suck*. And I can show you under my microscope the wonderful trunk, or proboscis, which it uses for that purpose."

Mrs. Wyman carefully arranged her specimen beneath the object-glass, and the children, in turns, peeped through, to see a beautiful, tapering

object, curled up like a watch-spring, or one of those difficult spirals one has to do in free-hand drawing.

"This tube," said their mother, "is double. It is, in fact, two tubes that lie side by side, and fit together by means of minute, projecting hairs, which lock into one another like the bristles of two brushes when put face to face. Yet these are so arranged that, in meeting, they form a third hollow, but quite air-tight tube between the other two. And this middle one is the passage through which the creature sucks the honey which is its food."

"Then what are the other two tubes intended for?" asked Frank.

"They are air-passages for the butterfly to breathe through. And it is supposed that the reason the proboscis is made in two halves, like that, which the insect can separate at will, is that in case the honey tube becomes clogged in any way, the creature can open it, and clean it out; else if the flower juices could not pass, it would starve to death."

"It ought to be provided with a little brush, like Aunt Mary cleans out the tube of the baby's feeding-bottle with," said Nellie.

"I think this plan is ever so much better," said Frank. "Now, mother, won't you please show us the butterflies' wings—I do love looking at them."

"First of all, you should look at the wing, or a piece of it, with the scales, or feathers, adhering,

to see how they are set. Then you shall examine the scales themselves. . . . See, now, this is just a fragment of the wing of a 'Peacock.' You are now looking at the beautiful eye-like spot so like a peacock's feather, from which the butterfly has been named."

"Oh, mother!" murmured Nellie. "Isn't it *lovely!* Just like precious stones, all blue, and red, and yellow, set in black velvet! Herbert, do look!"

"Why," exclaimed the boy—"Is *that* the way it looks? The little feathers, or whatever you call them, are set in even rows, overlapping one another like—like the tiles on a roof, or some of those queer coats of mail the soldiers used to wear in olden times. Do you really mean, mother"—and he lifted his eyes for a moment from the marvellous sight, to gaze into her face—"that the coloured dust that comes off on our fingers whenever we catch a butterfly, is *this*—all perfect, downy scales?"

"It is a fact, Herbert," said Mrs. Wyman, "and when Frank has done looking at these feathers still attached to the wing, I will show you what a few of them are like seen separately."

"What would the wing look like without any scales at all?" asked Frank. "I mean, what is the foundation of it made of?"

"Just a sort of transparent gauze like the wing of a fly or a bee. It has branching veins on it, called *nervures*, which support it as the ribs support an umbrella. And rows of dots show where the stems of the 'feathers' were set in.

"There, now," continued Mrs. Wyman, placing a fresh slip of glass under the microscope, "there you see singly a few specimens of those minute objects of which a hundred thousand would lie on a piece of paper as large as a postage-stamp."

Eagerly the children took their turns to peep through the lens, and many were the exclamations that followed.

"Why, they are like teeny-weeny *fans*," cried Nellie—"Japanese fans, I mean."

"Yes, and those big round palm leaves," said Frank. "And I see one just like a spade without a handle. Oh, and there's one like a cricket-bat, with a notch cut in the tip. I say, what a lot of different shapes. And to think they are *dust!*"

"Hurry up, and let me have a squint," said Herbert, for Frank seemed glued to the eye-piece of the instrument.

"I see a pair of butter-pats," he cried, next minute taking his brother's place. "And a sort of battledore."

"One scale is called the 'battledore,'" said his mother. "I expect that is the one you have noticed. It is worn only by the males of some species. A stronger magnifying glass than mine would show you that it is ornamented with rows of minute beads. I have also a picture, which you shall see by and by, of other curious forms of scales, that can be seen only through a very powerful glass. They are something like the petals of flowers that are divided at the tip, only that what

would be the *tip* of the petal is the *root* of the wing-scale, and has a tiny ball on the end of its stalk which fits into a socket in the insect's wing. These, too, are special decorations worn only by the gentlemen butterflies."

"A hundred thousand on a postage-stamp," muttered Herbert. "It's *too* wonderful. My brain won't take it in."

"Look at this, then," said his mother, changing the specimen, "and tell me what you think of it."

Herbert peeped. "It *looks*," he said slowly, "exactly like ever so many six-sided crystal beads set quite close together, with all their sides fitting, to form one sparkling ornament."

"It is just a tiny part of one butterfly's eye," said his mother. "Each of those crystal beads is a separate lens, and each one is believed to be in itself a perfect eye. So, as each of the butterfly's compound organs of sight has been found to contain in its circle—it is like half a ball in shape—no less than seventeen hundred of these lenses, the little creature must possess three thousand four hundred eyes."

Herbert dropped into the nearest arm-chair with a gasp, while his sister and brother pressed to gaze for themselves at this marvellous object.

"I shall never dare to look a butterfly in the face again," he said. "Fancy being stared at by three thousand four hundred eyes at once!"

"But how lovely it is!" cried Nellie. "The

whole eye must be like a magnificent button studded all over with tiny diamonds."

"A very good description, Nellie," said her mother. "I am afraid," she continued, "that after letting you see the butterfly's jewels, his antennæ, or feelers, will seem dull and uninteresting."

"Let's see them, anyhow," said Frank. "Nothing can be uninteresting that you tell us about, mother dearie," added Nellie prettily.

"Well, then, look at this. Here are three different shapes. Come, Nellie, and choose which you would like best for an umbrella-handle."

Nellie laughed, but the next moment she clapped her hands. "Why, mother," she cried, "that is exactly what they are like—only a *little* too curvy —with joints all up them like cane, and a big knob at the top. Amy Brown had a sunshade last summer with a handle the very image of the one with the ball at the end of it."

"That ball, or clubbed end," said Mrs. Wyman, "is what you must always look for to be sure of the difference between a butterfly and a moth. It can be seen easily with the naked eye. The butterfly's antenna has a clubbed end, always, and the moth's has not."

"Columbus!" said Frank, applying his eye to the microscope. "There's knuckle-bleeder for you! I shouldn't like the fellow to hit me on the head with it. A regular 'shillalagh.' Was he an Irishman?"

"If it is the straight club you are looking at, the owner was a 'Skipper,' but the curved one

came from a 'Swallow-tail.' The one with a big knob like the handle of Amy's sunshade belonged to a 'Fritillary.'"

"What is the use of the antennæ, mother?" asked Nellie.

"No one has yet exactly found out. But as the butterfly has a mysterious way of discovering a mate of its own kind, however securely she may be hidden, it has been supposed that the antennæ are the organs of an extra sense.

"It is related as a fact that if a female butterfly, just fresh out of the chrysalis, is shut up in a box, and that box carried out into her native woods, it will soon be surrounded by quite a crowd of males of the same species. Two females of a very rare kind of moth once attracted no less than one hundred and twenty wooers of their own kind, though they were shut up in a box, and could neither be seen, heard, nor smelt by their would-be lovers. Is not that marvellous?"

"Of course no persons could ever *tame* a butterfly, could they, mother?" asked Nellie.

"But it really has been done," said Mrs. Wyman, "wonderful as it may seem. A lady,* who dearly loved all God's creatures, and had been remarkably successful in taming birds and animals of many different kinds, thought she would like to try her hand on those wonderful little fairies of the insect world, about whose thoughts and feelings we know so little.

"One summer, when she had been watching

* Mrs. Eliza Brightwen.

the larvæ of the swallow-tailed butterfly through its different stages, she reserved two chrysalides until one of the perfect insects came out.

"Then she prepared a charming cage, made of fine threads of bamboo, which she furnished with a carpet of green moss, and placed a tiny vase of flowers in the middle. Then she spread a dainty breakfast of honey on a leaf, and introduced the fairy to its pretty home.

"Here the little creature lived for about three weeks, which seems to be the usual length of a butterfly's life, quite happy and content, being fed with plenty of honey day by day. It never fluttered, or tried to get away; but it was so tame that the lady would take it out into the garden, sitting on her finger, every fine day, where it would spread its beautiful wings in the sunshine, and even take short flights, but always returning willingly to its mistress's gentle hand. Of course the lady never touched its wings, or tried to handle it, so it knew of no rough treatment and felt no fear.

"On the very day this first butterfly died, the other chrysalis burst open to free the second insect. This one was quite as tame as the other, but more intelligent, for it found that by folding its wings it could pass between the slender bars of its cage. But even then it did not fly away, but perched on a window-sill in the sunshine, folding and unfolding its wings, and was perfectly ready to step upon the lady's finger, and be carried back to its cage. This little creature

existed happily for exactly the same time as the other, and then as quietly ceased to live.

"After that, the lady succeeded, with great pains and patience, in catching two wild butterflies, by holding out to them a finger with a drop of honey on it. One was a 'Red Admiral,' and the other a 'Painted Lady.' Each one, when once it had put out its proboscis and tasted the honey, was easily captured and placed in the little cage.

"The 'Painted Lady' was quiet and content from the first, but the Admiral had to be captured a second time — always without handling — the honeyed finger on which the creature rested being held inside the cage, until the butterfly got off it on to the moss or the flowers, when the door could be shut. But both in the end seemed equally happy, and would come on to the lady's finger twice a day to be fed."

"How sweet — how pretty!" cried Nellie. "How I wish I could have a pet butterfly like that!"

"Well, I'm astonished," owned Frank. "I never could have believed a butterfly had so much sense. I declare, I'll never chase one again. What with their fifty million eyes, all looking at you at once, and their uncanny 'second sight,' and those awful-looking life-preserver things they carry, they're more than a joke. No more butterfly-hunts for me!"

He spoke as if only in fun, but his mother knew him well enough to hope that he meant it in earnest.

"I am sure," she said "that the more we examine the beautiful creatures God has made, the more we shall admire them, and the less we shall care to hurt or destroy any innocent thing that lives. And it is not unmanly to be tender towards the creatures that are in our power.

"A great and good man, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, was conducting service in his church one summer morning, when, in one of the intervals between singing and prayers—or perhaps it was after the reading of a lesson, I don't remember exactly—he was seen to walk out of his place and carefully pick up something from the pavement of the chancel and carry it into the vestry. It was a butterfly, which had fluttered in at the open window, and Mr. Kingsley was afraid it might get stepped upon and hurt. He did not think that he was doing a silly thing to protect the poor insect, or that he was dishonouring God by pausing in His service to care for one of His creatures. Indeed, I am sure that he must have felt it to be true, as the poet Coleridge says, in that beautiful verse which you all know, or ought to know:

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All creatures great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made, and loves them all."